



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







600025974

PASTORAL LETTERS

OF THE

REV. JOHN HOBBS.

OXFORD:
BY T. COMBE, M.A., E. D. GARDNER, AND E. PICKARD HALL,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

PASTORAL LETTERS

OF THE

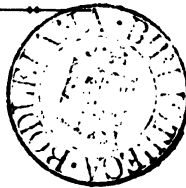
REV. JOHN HOBBS,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT HABERDASHERS' HALL CHAPEL,
STAINING LANE, LONDON.

WITH AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FRAGMENT.

'O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth : and hitherto
have I declared Thy wondrous works.'—PSALM lxxi. 17.

'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ... to shew that
the Lord is upright.'—PSALM xcii. 14, 15.



OXFORD:

J. C. PEMBREY, 159, WALTON STREET.

LONDON:

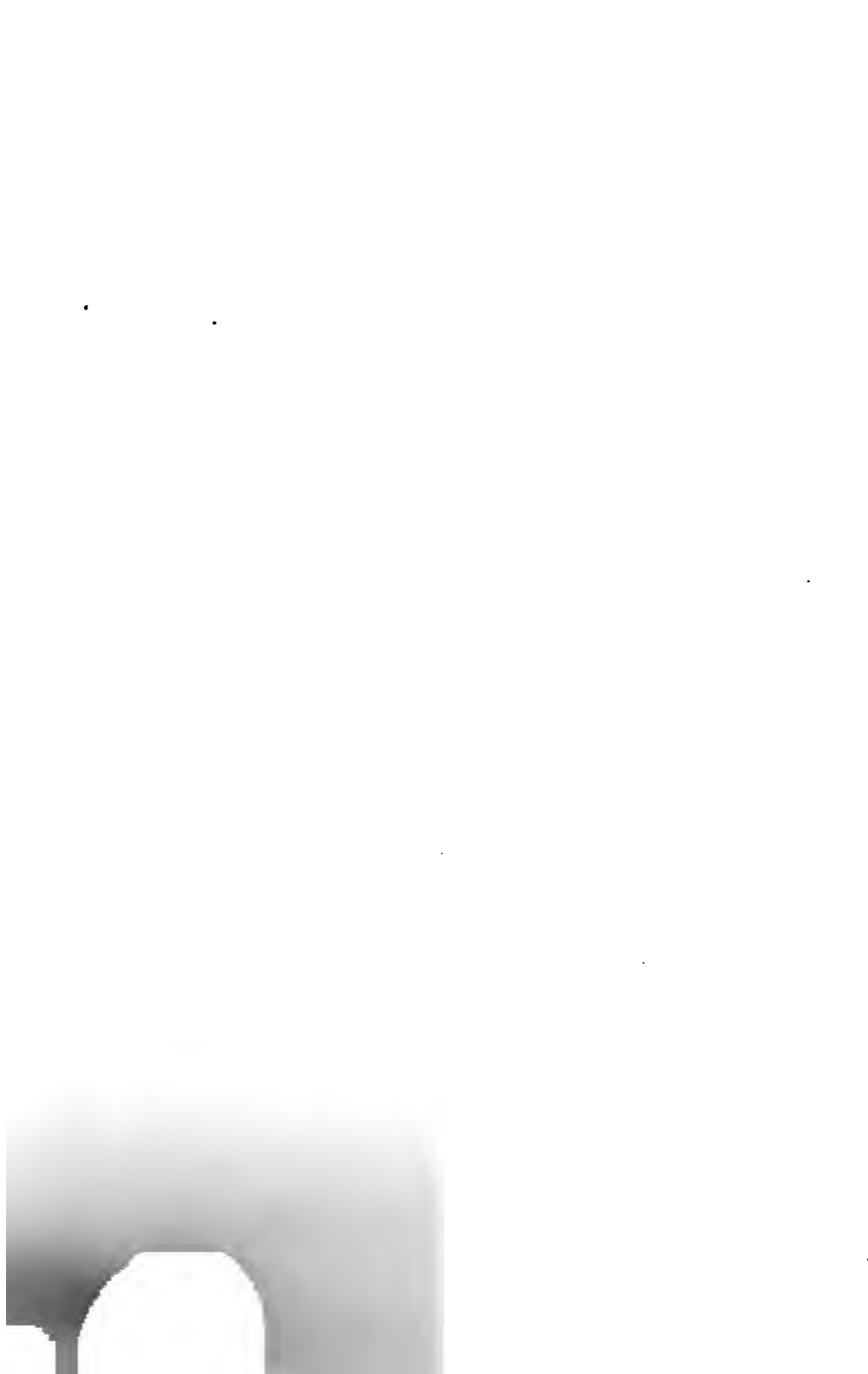
TO BE HAD AT THE CHAPEL, STAINING LANE,
AND AT 5, LITTLE LOVE LANE, WOOD STREET, CHEAPSIDE.

BRIGHTON:

G. STEDMAN, 68, UPPER ST. JAMES'S STREET.

1872.

210. j. 174.



PREFACE.

THE following Letters are for the most part those written by Mr. Hobbs to his own congregation, on various occasions of absence from his pulpit, either on account of ill-health, or for the benefit of change of air. They are now collected and published, in the hope that it may please the Lord to make them profitable to others besides those for whose more immediate benefit they were originally intended.

Mr. Hobbs was frequently solicited by friends to write some account of the way which the Lord had chosen for bringing him out of darkness into His marvellous light, and sending him forth to proclaim the everlasting gospel; but he appeared to feel little inclination to comply with the request, till about a year before his death, when all hesitation was removed, and he commenced the undertaking. Often interrupted by indisposition, the

short remainder of his life sufficed to carry him only a little way into his narrative; but the fragment which he has been permitted to leave behind is so deeply interesting, as exhibiting clearly and unmistakeably the wondrous working of God's mighty hand, that it has been deemed desirable to make it public, though it was dictated by the author almost with the unstudied freedom of private intercourse, and had not the advantage of his subsequent revision.

May the Lord condescend to accompany this volume with His gracious blessing, and to Him be given the glory due unto His name.

January, 1872.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
EARLY RECOLLECTIONS	1
LETTER TO THE REV. T. OXENHAM	95
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	106
PASTORAL LETTERS	109
APPENDIX	496



EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

I WAS born at Pimlico, June 7th, 1796. What follows respecting my early childhood, I have often heard related by my beloved mother. The third day after my birth, she awoke out of sleep; I was lying by her side with halfpence on my eyes, which naturally excited her surprise. The nurse had gone down stairs for a few minutes, and my brother, who was between three and four years old, was left in the room. My mother said to him, 'What have you been doing?' He answered, 'Nurse has let me see a baby with halfpence on its eyes, and I have put halfpence on your baby's eyes.' Within a few hours, violent inflammation of the eyes set in, and the medical attendant sent for Dr. Ware. He said that the inflammation was sufficient to destroy the strongest eye in two hours. Blisters, leeches, and fomentations were used; and at the end of three weeks I was so much reduced that the doctor and nurse said I was dead. But my mother would not believe it, and held me in her lap for not less than six hours, when I began to breathe again. I may indeed say with the Apostle that I have been 'in deaths oft,' or very near the

gates of death, as will appear by-and-by. What I have related was the first remarkable deliverance.

I would add, with reference to my eyes, that Dr. Ware intreated my parents not to allow any quack to put me to pain, under the pretence of restoring sight; but he said he should like to see me when I was about ten or eleven years of age. I remember calling on the doctor, in Bridge Street, Blackfriars. He had a perfect recollection of the case, and of the opinion he gave at first; which opinion was fully confirmed.

I have sometimes thought of what the disciples said to our Lord, respecting the blind man whose sight He recovered: 'Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Our Lord replied, 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' And may I not say with the Psalmist: 'I am as a wonder unto many; but Thou art my strong refuge?' It is said prophetically of our Lord: 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.'

When I was about two years old, my parents went to live with my maternal grandfather, near Bridgewater, Somersetshire. He wished my father to assist him in the management of his farm. Soon after we arrived, I was sitting one day before the kitchen fire, which, according to the country fashion, was made of wood piled on the hearth, when my brother in play came behind me, and threw me forward on the fire. At that instant a servant came in and caught me up, I having received no material injury. A minute's

delay, and I must have been in flames. This was the second almost miraculous deliverance. The gracious eye and preserving providence of my condescending Lord have ever been over me.

I come now to an event which is perhaps one of my earliest recollections. When between four and five years of age, I was standing outside the back-door of the house, when a lad who was employed on the farm, and had been sent on the pony to fetch grist from the mill, asked me if I would like to ride. I said I should. He took me up before him on the saddle, and knowing, as he afterwards confessed, that if he had been seen from any of the windows, he would not have been allowed to do this, he, to avoid observation, rode into the mill-stream, intending to cross it; but when in the middle, I slipped off the horse into the water. It was not very deep, so that he was able to get me out; but if this had happened a few feet further down the stream, I must have been carried through the mill, and of course killed. When the lad brought me into the house, there was much joy at my preservation. Thus was I again delivered, as it were, from the very jaws of death, by my ever-gracious Lord and Master.

Our sojourn in Somersetshire was shorter than had been expected. The family did not find living together quite congenial, and in the autumn of 1801 we returned to London, and my father entered into business.

My parents, not being rich, considered it desirable that I should learn to do something for myself; and

it was thought that the profession of music might be profitable, as well as an amusement to me. When I was exactly five years and three months old, I began to take lessons on the violin. It recurs to my mind that I could not remember to use the little finger to avoid open notes, and to get B on the fourth string, and I was so angry with myself, that I bit my little finger and made it bleed, saying, 'Now I shall remember to use it, as it is sore.' My master was not at all judicious ; he taught me by ear, so that I could play above 500 tunes, but all of a light kind of music.

I do not recollect anything else to remark on, until the summer of the year 1804, when my mother went to spend some weeks with her relations in Somersetshire, and took me with her. I enjoyed the change greatly. The singing of the birds, the hum of the insects, the fragrance of the flowers and fields, and all those signs of life and animation which are so perceptible in the country, delighted me beyond description. Indeed, after my return home, I so regretted the loss of what I had enjoyed, as never to feel thoroughly comfortable in London again ; the confinement to the house, the smoke, the noise, and other nuisances, vexed and annoyed me extremely. I am compelled to think that this was the first means the Lord was pleased to use in unsettling me as to this world. There was no spiritual life in it ; yet I cannot help thinking it was one step towards my being brought out of Egypt. There was certainly a shaking of the dry bones. I began to feel that I wanted something, but I could not tell what. There seemed to be something like *a blank* in all my pursuits.

When I was eight years old, I began to learn the pianoforte ; and I was made to be very diligent, never practising less than six, and sometimes eight hours a day. But I was not happy, though I was blessed with the most kind and affectionate of mothers. I might almost say I was her sole delight. She used to read the notes to me, and I could learn by heart two pages of Cramer or Clementi in a day, so as to be able to practise them alone.

But I did not receive any religious instruction, until God was graciously pleased to fulfil His own promise made to Zion : 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.' My mother attended church when it was convenient and the weather was fine, but my poor father seldom or never went to any place of worship. My mother taught me the Church Catechism when I was very young, but I had no idea of what was meant by it. I used to be very fond and proud of repeating it, because I learned it better, and could say it much more correctly, than either my sister or brother. I was often very angry with them for their stupidity in making omissions or mistakes ; and I was but too much encouraged to triumph over them, as I thought myself more clever than they.

I amused myself with toys, like other children, but was always very particular as to my associates. I was very fond of my own mental arithmetic ; such as reckoning how many hours or minutes were contained in any given space of time ; but my chief delight was to hear reading. Histories and biographies gratified me the most. It is very singular that before I was

blessed with the fear of God, I never liked works of fiction or imagination. When any new book was introduced to me, my usual inquiry was, 'Is it true?' I remember that, having been much amused with *Robinson Crusoe*, it was long before I would believe that it was not true; and when the conviction was forced upon me, I cried with disappointment. I would leave a game of play with my young companions at any time to be read to, and my dear mother used to oblige me by reading to me as much as she could.

When I was a child, I was very fond of visiting the counting-house of a neighbour, and I could go there by myself. One of the partners, who was a gentlemanly and well-informed man, was very kind to me, and took a great deal of pains to explain different things to me, so that I gained much information from him. I have sat on a high stool by the desk for hours, and been much amused by hearing the clerks post the books, and listening to the conversation on various subjects of those who went in and out.

I took an interest in politics beyond my years, and was always a staunch Tory. I well remember the death of William Pitt and Charles Fox; and also Sir Francis Burdett being sent to the Tower by a warrant of the House of Commons for breach of privilege.

I am now about to relate two events in which the tender care and watchful eye of my ever-gracious and preserving God were exercised towards me, while as yet I knew Him not, nor had any desire after the knowledge of Him or His ways.

It was on a Saturday that I perfectly remember visiting the neighbour's premises before mentioned. I entered the shop, and must have gone straight to an opening in the floor, known as the flap, and which was open at the time. I remember feeling myself fall, but was unconscious of the result. I understand that I was carried home ; but I have no recollection of any occurrence till the next morning (Sunday), when I remember the doctor giving me some medicine, but I was in no wise injured by the fall, and only felt a little stiff. There was a flight of stone steps outside the house, leading from the street to the cellar into which I fell, so that if I had struck my head against one of them in falling, I must in all probability have been killed.

After an interval of three or four years, I fell again in a similar way through the same hole. The people who were engaged in the cellar heard the noise, and supposed that some ropes had fallen down ; but to their great astonishment, I immediately got up and made my appearance. I had fallen sideways on a pulley used for rolling casks on. I was not at all hurt, and did not tell my mother what had happened till some hours after, that I might not alarm her. May I not say with Jude, ' Preserved in Jesus Christ ? ' Yes, preserved until called by the God of all grace. And all this time I was dead in trespasses and sins, an enemy to God, and alienated from Him through the ignorance that was in me.

I will now relate how Satan worked upon, and in my corrupt nature in early childhood. There is a difference between the workings of Satan while we

are in a state of nature, and that which takes place after a poor sinner is called by Divine grace. In the former case, he leads mankind, whatever may be their age or condition, captive at his will. They are his slaves ; for, ' of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' But when the strong man armed has been cast out of the palace, he assails by way of temptation. I mean that the enemy leads all unregenerated persons with the consent of their will ; but the renewed children of God are subject to his fiery darts and cruel temptations : so that there is a difference between captivity to sin and Satan, and temptation to evil. Hence the petition : ' Lead us not into temptation.'

When I was in Somersetshire, as before related, I frequently heard the work-people and servants about the farm talk of witches and witchcraft, in which they had a superstitious belief. There was a person in Devonshire who professed to have the power of controlling the witches. The surplice of the clergyman of the parish had been stolen, but the laundress believed that a poor woman had got it away by witchcraft, and applied about it to the person just mentioned. These stories used to amuse me very much ; and I recollect hearing a man say that if any one wished to possess the black art, he must sell himself to the wicked one ; and that this could be accomplished by going round a church seven times, and blaspheming the name of God at every pinnacle. Now, who that is unacquainted with the evil of sin in his own heart, would or could believe that a child, young as I then was, could so far sin against God as

to desire to possess this abominable power? Yes, he who now dictates this narrative was thus held in captivity by sin and Satan; for after my return to London I often used to think, 'I wish I was a witch.' And I am quite sure that if I had not been prevented by circumstances which rendered it impossible, I should have tried the horrible experiment suggested. I had not the slightest thought about sin or wickedness; I only wanted to gratify my own diabolical wishes. Could anything less than almighty, free, sovereign grace, have ever rescued such a brand from the burning? No, I am quite sure that I never should have turned to, or have sought after God, if He, in His matchless mercy, had not condescended to seek after me. This and other sins of my childhood were laid to my charge when God convinced me of my state as a sinner; and they furnished awful matter for the accusations of Satan and a guilty conscience.

I must mention another circumstance, which may appear to some a mere trifle, but which, when afterwards I found myself in the strong hand of Divine Justice, was to me very fearful. A lad whom I sometimes met, the nephew of a neighbour in London, one day showed me a small morocco pocket-book. I wished to possess it, and he said he would give it me, if I would bring him my pockets full of chestnuts, an article in which my father dealt. I promised to bring them, and I well remember taking an opportunity, when I thought no one could see me, of filling my trousers' pockets quite full, and giving them to him. Now this circumstance shows that there must have

been something like natural conscience in me. I must have known it was wrong, or else why should I have been afraid or ashamed of any one's seeing me take them? I certainly thought nothing about sin; but afterwards when the guilt of sin was charged home upon my conscience by an application of the holy, righteous law of God, I was made to see and feel that I was a thief.

From my earliest recollection I have been the subject of many illnesses, my constitution being naturally delicate. I have often been brought very low; according to all human appearance, very near to the gates of death; but my gracious God has been pleased from time to time so to strengthen and recover me, that I continue until now. For several years during the month of March and part of April I was visited with an attack of severe pain in the head. I could eat, drink, and converse, if my head was held tightly; but if I attempted to move, I suffered an agony. I was carried up and down stairs every day, not being able to bear the pain of moving myself. In addition to our regular medical man, a fresh physician was consulted every year. One said it was an extension of the muscles of the head; another, that it was water on the head; others all gave different opinions; and I used to be brought so low with leeching and blistering that it was scarcely thought I could recover.

I hope never to forget the great goodness of God to me in this respect, even before I knew anything of myself as a sinner, or of Christ as a Saviour, that He has been pleased from time to time to incline one

kind friend after another to minister to my comfort. A young lady, about seven years older than myself, the daughter of the friend and neighbour before mentioned, used to come almost every day when I was ill, to read to me some amusing book, and cheer me by her lively conversation. When I was in health, I visited my friend's house almost daily, and always received a cordial welcome. I cannot fully express the sense of obligation that I feel to this family for their kindness to me during my childhood.

I continued to practise the piano, and learned some duets, which I used to play with my kind friend. I had a voice for singing at that time, and sang some of Braham's songs, while she played the accompaniments.

There was a gentleman, the son of a banker, who used to call on me ; he also played the piano, but I could play better than he ; and I never would alter the time of a duet to meet his deficiencies ; but when I played with my female friend, if she was at fault, I always endeavoured to cover it. The truth is, I was much more fond of the company of ladies than gentlemen ; but I now trace in this a fruit of the corruption of our fallen nature.

It was at the house of my friend so often mentioned that I was first introduced to Captain Duckett, whom I afterwards found to be a well-known hearer of Mr. Huntington. I mention this, because he knew me when I was in the state of nature, and of the world. Years after this, when the Lord had been gracious to me, and after I had commenced speaking

in His name, I met him at the house of another friend, when he both rejoiced and wept at the goodness of God to me. I had frequently met him, and had often joined with those who condemned and ridiculed his religion.

I am now about to relate an event, or rather a train of events, in which I have since clearly seen that the hand of the Lord towards me was conspicuously displayed. Satan was permitted to lay a snare for me, which must have ended in the final destruction of both body and soul, if the mercy of that gracious God, whom at that time I neither knew nor acknowledged, had not delivered me. It was a deliverance indeed, as will appear by the sequel.

During my frequent visits to the counting-house before spoken of, I was introduced to Mr. B., a gentleman connected with a large house of business in the City. He soon became deeply interested in me, expressing a very warm attachment to me, and often called on me. He entered into my musical pursuits ; but his main object was conversation with me, which soon attracted my very deep attention. I am quite sure that his motives were perfectly sincere, and that he had a feeling of real regard for me ; but the enemy of souls was at work through him as an instrument. He frequently read to me interesting pieces of poetry, and extracts from various authors. He often talked about the beauties of creation, and the one only true God, the glorious and incomprehensible Creator.

Such conversations, being perfectly new to me, drew my mind towards him, and furnished matter for

contemplation. I afterwards learned that he told different friends that I had a mind capable of receiving impressions beyond my years. I knew him for some time before he introduced the subject of religion ; but when he did so, he endeavoured to convince me that it was the most important matter that could occupy the human mind. He told me that God had given me reasoning powers sufficient to enable me to judge and decide for myself as to religion, whether natural or revealed. He led me to believe that the human mind was the highest and noblest thing in existence. He admitted that Scripture was a revelation made by God to men concerning Himself and all creation ; and asserted that no supernatural teaching was necessary to our forming a right judgment as to its meaning. He extolled philosophy and rationalism above everything ; and said that by the right use of our senses we might arrive at the greatest measure of happiness in this world, and in that which is to come.

It need not be wondered at that such teaching was very gratifying to my poor carnal mind. I used to spend hours in thinking over what I had been told.

After I had been acquainted with him some time, he told me that he was a Unitarian ; which meant, he said, that he believed in one only true God, and that this was the only scriptural religion. ‘As to the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity,’ said he, ‘let me appeal to your own common sense. Is it possible that three can be one?’ I replied, ‘Certainly not ; it is contrary to common sense.’ ‘Well then,’ he said, ‘the church that you attend holds this most unreasonable

doctrine.' And I, through the working of Satan on my darkened understanding and perverted carnal mind, was delighted to believe all that I was told.

I forbear to relate the manner in which he explained away the true meaning of all those passages which set forth the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Divine Personality of the Holy Ghost. I do so because the arguments of the Unitarians are so subtle, that if any one should read these recollections after my death, they might be led astray even as I was. And I would take this opportunity of remarking to all inquirers after Divine truth, that it is a very unsafe practice to read erroneous authors for the purpose of finding out and confuting their errors. It seems to me to be like tempting the God of truth. O my dear reader, do not trifle with Divine truth, by seeking to understand error!

But to proceed. I well remember when Mr. B. first proposed to my parents to introduce me to a circle of friends, whose acquaintance, he said, would be a very great advantage to me; that I should find food for a mind which, he was pleased to say, was capable of receiving a kind of instruction which it was not possible I could obtain at home; and that a more enlarged acquaintance with men and things would be very gratifying to me, afford me much amusement, and be very useful hereafter. He also said he should like to take me to the place of worship which he attended. This gilded bait delighted my mistaken parents, and they thought themselves only too happy in committing the training of their child to a gentleman who was so willing to undertake it,

and so capable of carrying it out. Besides, as they pointed out to me, such disinterested kindness was but rarely met with. Of course I was well pleased to be caught in this snare of Satan ; as Solomon says : 'He goeth after her' (a false church) 'straight-way, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.' As to what is commonly called morality, I never witnessed, either in Mr. B. or any of his friends, the slightest deviation from the most strict propriety of conduct.

I was soon taken to the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street, Strand, where Dr. Belsham was the minister, to whom I was introduced ; as also to a very aged Unitarian minister, Dr. Lindsay, who stroked my head, and told me to love God, and God would love me. I became acquainted also with a celebrated author, Dr. Carpenter, of Exeter, who presented me with some volumes of Unitarian sermons, charging me to have them carefully read, and to study them deeply.

Mr. B. frequently took me to private concerts ; the society, music, and singing amused me a good deal. And here I must not forbear to relate that in one particular I acted with great craftiness and sad deception towards my poor well-meaning parents. They were anxious that I should continue my study of music ; and I was at this time taking lessons of Mr. Jacobs, the then highly-esteemed organist of Surrey Chapel. I have gone to bed at eight o'clock, risen again in the night, not knowing the time, and have practised till morning. I remember that on one occasion, when I first sat down on the music stool, I

heard the watchman cry, 'Twelve o'clock;' and I remained practising Clementi's Octave Lesson and Cramer's Exercises till seven.

But sometimes it would happen that with all this practice I could not get my lesson perfect for the master; when, in several instances, I adopted the following artifice. My piano was an old-fashioned square one of Broadwood's. There was a tuning hammer left in the end. I used to raise the cover, and knowing that each note was sounded by two strings, I gave two of the pegs, somewhere about the middle of the instrument, a sharp turn, so as to break the strings, then closed the piano as if nothing had happened. After breakfast I would sit down, and begin to play. It was soon discovered that one of the notes would not sound, at which I appeared surprised. But this answered my purpose, as that day was lost in sending for the tuner, and he did not always come the next. By this deception I gained my object of going out with my friend in the evening, and furnishing myself with an excuse for not having my lesson ready. Oh! how deceitful is sin, both as to its first appearance, and all its various ramifications. This will be found both by young and old.

My love of pleasure had at this time arrived at a degree of intensity which I believe is not very common in lads of the age I then was. Society, conversation, going out—in a word, pursuing the charms and allurements of the world, was all that delighted me. Mr. B. would often call for me at five or six o'clock in the evening to take me to various friends of his. I went several times to Dr. Pett's of Hack-

ney, where I met Mrs. Barbauld, the well-known authoress of *Early Lessons for Children*, and her husband, Dr. and Miss Aikin, the celebrated traveller Mungo Park and his sister, and other literary persons, too many for me to remember. Sometimes music, sometimes reading, scientific conversation, and the discussion of the awful errors of Unitarianism, occupied the evenings till twelve or one o'clock.

At other times Mr. B. would take me to the suburban residences of his friends. I well remember, when Vauxhall Gardens vied as a place of public amusement with Ranelagh, we left home one evening in the month of July to visit a friend at Vauxhall, whose grounds extended to the river. Our object was to sit out of doors to hear the nightingale, and eat radishes, which we gathered and dipped in the water. Such was the neighbourhood of Vauxhall at the time to which I refer. We frequently visited other friends at Camberwell, Peckham, Norwood, and Dulwich, rising at four o'clock in the morning, walking several miles before breakfast to enjoy the fresh air, and then returning by one of the morning coaches. I once dined at the Duke of Grafton's, and went several times to Timothy Brown's, the partner of the celebrated brewer, Mr. Whitbread, M.P.

In all this, self-gratification was my only aim. I remember that on one occasion my pride had a severe check. My friend was acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Dakin, one of the minor canons of Westminster, to whom he took me one Sunday, and laughingly said, 'Here, I have brought you a youth that will be more than a match for you in divinity.' To which he

coolly replied, 'Sir, I esteem you very highly as a philosopher and a scientific friend, but I am grieved that you should have poisoned the mind of this young gentleman with your dangerous errors.' Turning to me, he said, 'My young friend, I will not hear a word you may have to say upon the sacred subject of the Trinity.' Oh! this cut down my pride with a witness. I only wanted an opportunity to show off my imaginary knowledge (which was darker than darkness itself) in argument with a clergyman of the Established Church.

There is one thing more that I cannot omit to mention, that my delight in female society increased greatly with my years. No music pleased me half so much as the female voice. I remember on two occasions, when young friends of mine, with whom I had spent much pleasurable time, married, I was almost inconsolable for a while, saying that I should never enjoy myself again, having lost their society. I knew not at that time the secret evil that was lurking in my fallen nature, but God has in mercy shown it me since.

Before proceeding further with my early recollections, I would pause to reflect a little upon my true state and condition at this period. As a child of Adam, I was involved in all the tremendous consequences of his sin and disobedience. His act was my act, his guilt my guilt, his state in all respects after the fall was my state by imputation, for by the disobedience of one many were made sinners. Besides, Adam begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness; and all his posterity are alike involved in

his guilt, alike dead in trespasses and sins, alike alienated from God by wicked works, alike blinded through the darkness of ignorance that is in them, enemies to God, hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, led captive by Satan at his will, having the conscience seared with a hot iron, twice dead to God, and to all righteousness and true holiness. Add to this, that we are all born in a state of total ignorance of this our sad condition, spiritually dead, consequently incapable of performing any spiritual act, and subject to temporal death, as it is appointed unto all men once to die. In this total alienation from God must consist the state of eternal death ; it is a final separation from Him who is the fountain of all life, light, and love.

Being thus born into this world, I necessarily pursued one undeviating course of sin and iniquity. Actual transgression is the fruit of original sin ; the tree being corrupt, of necessity all its fruit must be corrupt. Hence I went astray from the womb, speaking lies ; and so I should have continued to the end, had not the free, sovereign, discriminating grace of God rescued me, by a display of almighty power, from that state of bondage to sin, to self, to Satan, and the world, in which I was held, under the curse and condemnation of a broken law. But of this I was totally ignorant, until enlightened from above with the light of the living.

That the god of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, is possessed of a very extensive knowledge of the whole creation of God, I have no doubt. He knows the state of

innocence in which he was created ; he is fully aware of his fall from that state through sin ; but Satan can never repent. That he is well acquainted with men in general, and with those things that concern them, I think there can be no question. I have often wondered whether Satan, who is continually going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, has any means of knowing who among the fallen sons and daughters of Adam are loved by God with an everlasting love, before that love is openly manifested in their behalf. Perhaps the peculiar care that God takes of His own, while they are yet strangers to Him (for they are said to be preserved in Jesus Christ), may be so noticed by Satan as to excite his jealousy against the objects of God's choice ; for it seems to me that many of the Lord's redeemed ones, while in the state of nature, have been driven on to a greater degree of sin and opposition against God than others. Abraham was an idolater, and Paul did many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. I, too, at the time to which I am now referring, was very young in years, but old in sin.

On looking back to this period, it often seems to me that Satan was permitted to crowd into a few years of my existence all the evil thoughts and desires and general pollution of man's nature. I was not only full of all real and imaginary evil, but I was led by Satan and unbelief to dishonour that worthy Name by the which all the saints are called, to deny the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. For 'he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father ;' and if either of the

adorable Persons in the glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, is denied, the whole Godhead is rejected; for there is no God, to the exclusion of either of the glorious Persons of the Trinity in Unity. Reader, may you be led with myself to see, contemplate, and feel the awful state in which I was; and I must have remained in that awful state to all eternity, had not matchless grace interposed to rescue me as a brand from the burning.

I will now proceed, as the Lord is pleased to enable me, to relate the way and manner in which He condescended to deliver me from the power of darkness, and to translate me into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And, in doing this, I would not rely upon a treacherous memory. How many of God's mercies do I continually forget! But there are two things which encourage me to proceed in this undertaking. First, I know that what God does is done for ever. Abraham could never forget that God called him from Ur of the Chaldees; Jacob could never forget the God of Bethel; nor could Moses forget the burning bush, or the good will of Him that dwelt in it. And David says, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, for Thy word hath quickened me.' Some of God's peculiar dealings with His people are written, as it were, not with ink and paper, but in fleshy tables of their hearts; and there are some things which, I feel, I can never forget.

Secondly, I am encouraged by our Lord's promise to His disciples: 'The Comforter, which is the Holy

Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' A very dear friend of mine, who is now in glory, used to admire my memory ; but I always told him it was not through the power of the natural faculty of memory that I was enabled to repeat much of God's word, for sometimes I felt as though I could not remember half-a-dozen texts ; but that the Lord was graciously pleased to fulfil in my behalf the promise just referred to.

Though, as I have before related, I used to go with Mr. B. to the Unitarian Chapel, I still continued at times to accompany my mother to church. One such occasion, when attending at Christ Church, Newgate Street, I can never forget. The Rev. Samuel Crowther, who was then the minister of that church, took the following words of our Lord for his text: 'For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins' (John viii. 24). I do not remember any portion of the sermon ; it was the text, together with these words, 'Ye shall die in your sins : whither I go, ye cannot come' (ver. 21), that was accompanied with such a Divine power as I had never experienced before. It came like a flash of lightning, suddenly. Like Paul, I saw a great light shining round about me ; that is, my understanding was suddenly enlightened, and I saw in a moment that the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I had so wickedly and impiously denied, is the true God and eternal life. I could not attend to the sermon, but several texts were brought to my mind.

I must have known them before ; but they never had appeared to me as I now saw them, all confirming that great, that glorious, that fundamental truth, that the Child born and the Son given is indeed the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace ; that He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

As I have said, I knew all these and other such texts before ; but I never knew them in their true, proper sense and meaning. I had been accustomed to think that wherever the Saviour was spoken of as God, it was only in a figurative sense, ('As there be gods many, and lords many.' Angels are called gods : 'Worship Him, all ye gods.' Magistrates and kings are called gods : 'I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High') : or that when the term God was applied to the Saviour, it was nothing more than a poetical licence. But I now saw, as clear as the sun, that it was He, the eternal I AM, that appeared to Moses in the bush, and said, 'I AM THAT I AM ;' which signifies, I am what I ever was, and I ever shall be what I now am, the self-existent and independent JEHOVAH. These words occupied my mind during the sermon, and when I returned home I was continually meditating upon the Scripture testimonies concerning the Godhead and Divine Personality of the Saviour. Oh ! how different did these testimonies now appear to me. It is written : 'The entrance of Thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple.'

Here I wish to remark that I had no particular discovery of the evil of sin. I knew nothing as yet of the plague of my own heart ; but I clearly saw, and was fully convinced, that that Almighty Saviour, whose Godhead I had been accustomed to deny and dishonour, is the self-existent and independent JEHOVAH, over all, GOD blessed for evermore.

Although, as I said, I had no particular discovery of the evil of sin, yet I was filled with an indefinable sense of fear, a solemn awe of Him whose holy name I had so dishonoured. Now, though there was nothing saving in this discovery, yet I believe it was the commencement of that Divine teaching which the Lord has been graciously pleased to favour me with. As I had not yet any knowledge of my need of a Saviour, His finished salvation was not yet brought to my mind ; it was His eternal Godhead and distinct Personality that was revealed to me ; and I believe that such teaching is necessary to the salvation of a poor sinner. When Peter made that noble confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' our Lord replied, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter,'—that is, a lively stone in mercy's building,— 'and upon this rock'—that is, Himself ; for 'Who is a rock, save our God ?' and Paul says, 'That rock was Christ'— 'I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' I believe that no sinner can ever be saved until he is brought to know and believe that Jesus Christ is the great

mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, the eternal Son of God, and that He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

I went on meditating on these glorious truths for exactly one week. I had no particular inward feeling, but my mind was occupied in what appeared to me to be the most sublime contemplation.

On the Sunday following that of which I have been speaking, I went again to the same church, when Mr. Crowther took for his text, Rom. vi. 23 : 'For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' As before, the sermon did not engage my attention. It was God's own word which was brought home to my heart with a convincing power such as I had never before felt—'The wages of sin is death.' I had never till now felt that I was a sinner. My ideas of sin had always been very loose and undefined. I do not know that I had ever had any very serious thoughts about sin. I knew there was such a thing ; but what it meant had never been any real concern to me. But now, while the minister was preaching, the word *Sin, Sin*, rested upon my mind. I said to myself, 'What is it ? Surely it is something very terrible, as its wages is death.' The latter part of the text did not at all occupy my thoughts ; it was the word *SIN*.

After I returned home, I continued to be almost constantly thinking about sin ; and it occurred to me that whatever we did contrary to God's commandments, must be sin ; and whatever we omitted to do, that was enjoined by Him in His Word, that this also

must be sin. Such were some of my first ideas concerning the nature of sin.

But this was soon followed up by such reflections as these : ' Why, I have done many things which I knew were wrong, and omitted to do that which I knew was right.' I well remember that the following words, used in the Church Service, rested as a heavy burden upon my mind : ' We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.' I knew that I had often been very passionate, had told many lies, and done many other things which I now knew, and began in some measure to feel, were sinful.

An inexpressible sense of fear now began to possess my mind, which discovered itself in my conduct then. Mr. B., the Unitarian of whom I have before spoken, called on me a day or two after the second Sunday just referred to, to take me out with him as usual ; but, as I had expected him, I before told my mother that I was ill, and went to bed. - I felt that it was impossible for me ever to go out with him again. But as he left a message that he would call again in a day or two, I was determined that I would have a cold, and be ill. I knew that damp feet always gave me cold ; and the next day when I was up, I poured water into my shoes. This answered my purpose, for I soon had a severe cold, which frightened my mother, and I was confined to my room.

I could speak more freely to my dear mother than to any one ; and I told her that when I got well

I could never go out again with Mr. B., because his religion was quite wrong. 'He denies that the Lord Jesus Christ is God,' I said; 'and you know that the Bible and the Prayer Book tell us that Christ is God, and I am quite sure that He is; and I do feel that it is the most awful thing in the world to deny this truth.' My mother seemed very much vexed with me, and so did my father, when he knew my resolution. They said that I was throwing away a very advantageous prospect; that Mr. B. was a rich man, that he had no family, and they were fully persuaded that he intended to provide for me very handsomely; and that they should be very angry if I was so foolish. What business had I to interfere with religion? People would differ in their views. And for some time after this, I was often scolded for my perverseness. But that gracious God whom I knew not then, was pleased to deliver me out of this snare of the devil; and the next time I met Mr. B. I was enabled to tell him plainly that I could never go with him again. This was a sore trial to my young mind, for I had a great regard for him, he had been so very kind to me; but the fear of God's anger so worked in me, that I could not consent to his wishes. I was enabled to answer his arguments, and told him that they were all mere sophistry, that he and all the Unitarians were heretics, and that they must all perish in their sins, if they died in the faith of that lie which they held. After this, Mr. B. never called again. I never met him more. My friends were more displeased with me than ever; but my mother soon forgave me.

Who can be surprised at a mother's feelings towards her child? I believe that she loved me more than her other children.

From this time my life became more monotonous. I had very few acquaintances. And this state of things suited my feelings; for though I had little or no knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, except that glorious truth of a Trinity of Persons in the One only true God, I began to feel and to think more deeply about my future state. I had no godly friends or acquaintances to help me either by their conversation or example; no one who could answer any inquiry that I might wish to make about spiritual and eternal things. Those children who are blessed with godly parents have much, very much, to be thankful for: for although it is true, quite true, that parents cannot communicate grace to their offspring, yet the example and conversation of godly parents is a great favour bestowed upon them. Whatever young people may learn of the letter of Divine truth while they are in a state of nature, they will have to give up, or at least to learn over again experimentally, when God condescends to teach them Himself. Yet I *must* think it a great blessing when young people have their minds stored with the Word of God.

I possessed none of these advantages; and I believe it was best for me, as God was graciously pleased to teach me Himself, without human instrumentality, and thereby to fit me for the work to which He afterwards called me. I do not mean by these remarks to imply that my parents altogether rejected the Word of God; but they were strangers to

that power in which His kingdom stands. I soon discovered this, after the Lord began to teach me Himself.

Now a comparatively solitary life was most congenial to my state of mind. I began to feel that I was a sinner before God ; and that text, 'The wages of sin is death,' was almost perpetually sounding in my heart ; together with, 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' I was led to see that temporal death was not annihilation ; that there must be an existence hereafter ; and then, if God was angry with me as a sinner, how could I endure His wrath for ever ? I used to think a great deal about the wrath of God, and thought I felt it already. This produced in me at times a remarkable state of fear. I was sent to bed at eight o'clock ; and sometimes, after falling asleep, I was awakened by the neighbours shutting up their shops, and I would spring out of bed, and run down stairs in my night-clothes, saying that I thought thieves were breaking into the house. But the fact was, I was afraid that I should die or be killed, and then what would become of me ?

I never could disclose any of my feelings at this time, no, not even to my mother, as I was sure that no one could understand me. But I gradually sank lower and lower under a sense of sin, though nobody had ever told me that I was a sinner. I felt that my sins were a heavy burden upon my heart, too heavy for me to bear, and I dreaded the eternal wrath of God. That awful passage, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the

•

book of the law to do them,' frequently sounded in my ears.

Under this heavy distress of mind, my bodily strength, which was never very great, began to give way. My music was a great annoyance to me; and my affectionate mother, perceiving that my health was fast sinking, kindly consented to my leaving off practising it. I now found the truth of what the Psalmist says, 'When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth;' and of that in Isaiah, 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.'

My kind mother had always been ready to read for my amusement either history or biography, of which I was very fond; but when the Lord was pleased to set my iniquities before Him, my secret sins in the light of His countenance, I lost my taste for this and every other kind of amusement. I used to ask my mother to read the Bible to me. She would turn to the historical parts, but I generally begged her to read Job or the Psalms. We had no religious books, except *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Blair's *Sermons*, and Hervey's *Meditations*. The sermons were now read on Sunday evenings, instead of the *History of England*, but I found a great deficiency in them. What it was, or how it was, I could not then tell, only they were not to me like the Bible, and I did not care to hear them read.

At this time I had a very great reverence for the

Word of God, firmly believing that the whole of it was true ; and I now began to learn a lesson, which was, and still is, very useful to me, namely, that there is the greatest difference between hearing God's Word read, and having it applied by His own almighty power to the mind and conscience. When the promises were read, they made no impression either on my heart or memory. And why ? Because I was then under the law. God was teaching me out of His law ; and ' what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law ; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' I used to wonder why the wicked were not punished in this life, but, as before noticed, that text which says, '*The wages of sin is death,*' continually followed me. I sometimes heard people say that it was ' a happy deliverance,' when persons who had suffered much from pain and sickness were taken out of this world by death ; but believing that the wages of sin is death, it appeared to me that death must be a penal sentence, a punishment for sin, and that it has an eternal duration ; and I used to think, What are the sufferings of this world in comparison of that Divine wrath which follows death ?

I became more and more distressed in my mind ; and what seemed to add to my affliction was that I could not mention my feelings to any one. I used to think to myself, Why was I ever born ? Why did I not die before I had committed any sin ? Like Job, I was ready to curse the day of my birth, such very wicked thoughts would possess my mind.

I hated the Almighty, as a cruel, tyrannical being. Self-pity worked to a very great extent, and all this sunk me lower and lower under a sense of guilt. When the sentence of a broken law, the wrath of God revealed therein, a guilty conscience, the fear of death, the workings of sin, and the temptations of Satan all meet together, a poor, wretched, condemned sinner feels as if he must be swallowed up every moment. Such was my sad experience. I could enlarge much more in describing the sorrowful days and sleepless nights which I passed when God's wrath lay heavy upon me, and His hand pressed me sore, but I forbear, lest it should seem that I say too much.

I will now relate, as the Lord is graciously pleased to enable me, how He delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling ; how He brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, set my feet upon a rock, established my goings, and put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God.

I perfectly recollect one evening, when I was left alone for several hours, meditating on my sad condition, with a mind as full of rebellion against God as sin and Satan could make it, that God's holy, righteous law was brought before my mind in a most extraordinary manner. It seemed to me like a map laid out before me. Each of the ten commandments occupied my mind separately ; and it was as if a voice sounded in my conscience, ' You have broken every one of these.' To which I replied, ' Not so: there are several of the commandments I have never broken, particularly the first three and the

seventh ; and therefore I cannot be as guilty as many others, who have broken all of them :’ when the following words were, as it were, sounded in my ears : ‘ Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.’ This was followed by these words : ‘ The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin ;’ and such light broke in upon my understanding as I had never experienced before. I was led to see that ‘ the *thought* of foolishness is sin ;’ that it is not necessary that the outward sin should be committed, to bring the sinner under condemnation ; but that the inward thought of the mind, the inward desire of the heart, the gratification which impure and unholy thoughts afford to the heart, that impure source from which they all proceed, is, in the eye of the law, in the sight of a just and holy God, *sin*, even that sin which subjects the sinner to temporal and eternal death. This completely stopped my mouth. I had nothing to say why the sentence should not take its full effect upon poor wretched me.

I did indeed feel that I was the chief of sinners ; and yet my obdurate heart was so hard and impenitent, that I never so much as thought of putting up one petition for God’s mercy to be extended to me. I had never yet cried to God for mercy, for I was so convinced that He was unchangeable in His justice and truth, that I could not ask Him to mitigate the righteous sentence pronounced in His Word against sin and sinners. As I said before, I never knew anything about religion in theory, not having any acquaintances who could instruct me by

their conversation concerning the way of salvation. All I knew of a just and holy God, and of myself as a transgressor, was what He was pleased to teach me by the application of His own Word in secret.

I now felt as if I was sinking through the floor. It seemed to me as if I was descending fathoms every moment, and I really thought that I was going into the pit of destruction; when all of a sudden these words sounded in my heart with such a life-giving power as I had never before known: 'Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.' A momentary thought passed through my mind, 'What good can the salvation of *Israel* do me?' This was immediately followed with, 'I have saved *thee* with an everlasting salvation.' Faith came by hearing. It was an appropriating faith; and I believed, as firmly as I did my own existence, that I *was* saved with an everlasting salvation. All my guilt, and all my fear, and shame, and sense of sin were taken away in a moment. Wrath flowed out, and everlasting love flowed in: and I became as happy as I believe it is possible for a poor sinner, saved by sovereign grace, to be in this time state.

And thus it is manifest that neither my conviction of sin, nor the revelation of God's pardoning love, came to me through human instrumentality. I was as ignorant of the plan of salvation as it was possible to be; but it pleased God to reveal His Son in my heart. I heard no sound, no articulate voice, and yet I knew that it was the voice of the Chief

Shepherd speaking to my heart, by the power that attended it. It communicated life ; as it is written : 'The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' It wrought faith in my heart, so that I was constrained to believe that I was indeed saved with an everlasting salvation.

I had very little, or no knowledge of gospel truth. This came afterwards. 'The entrance of Thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple.' God wrought His own work in me, and then condescended to shine in my heart, giving me the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus experience came first, and a knowledge of that experience followed. He first gave me Divine wisdom, and then gave me understanding to know what He had done for me. This came by degrees. He shone upon His word, and gave me an understanding to know Him that is true. I received, as John says, 'an unction from the Holy One,' and the Scriptures of Divine truth were by little and little unfolded to my mind and understanding, so that I saw, I may say, almost day by day, greater glory, excellency, beauty and preciousness in the Person of my adorable Lord and Saviour. I used to wonder at the light which seemed to shine brighter and brighter. This afforded me such sweet entertainment as I can never describe. I frequently said, 'Lord, what is it ?' The whole work seemed to me so wonderful. But God was fulfilling His own gracious word of promise : 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye.' This I have experienced,

both in grace and providence, more or less, to the present time.

I cannot too much insist upon the efficacy of Divine teaching. I have found it to be all-sufficient. Not that I would undervalue human instrumentality. No: God forbid! for He promises, 'I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.' But I am quite sure of this, that all human teaching with respect to Divine things, if unaccompanied with Divine power, is useless, yea, worse than useless; for if the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch.

After this wonderful deliverance from sin and guilt, from the wrath of God, from the curse and condemnation of a broken law, after I was thus turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, I began to tell those about me of what God had done for my soul. But it appeared so strange and unaccountable, that they asked me what I was talking about. My mother told me afterwards that they really thought I had gone out of my mind. She had observed with much pain the low and melancholy state of mind I had been in, so different, as she said, from my natural disposition; and then, all of a sudden, I became so unaccountably happy, that she thought I had certainly lost my senses. Besides, I repeated so much Scripture, which they had no idea that I knew; and what I told them I had experienced was usually confirmed by some text. This astonished those who heard me. Let not the reader suppose there was anything miraculous

in this. It was, I believe, the fulfilment of a gracious promise made by our Lord to His disciples, and which promise He has continued to fulfil in my experience to the present time: 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth;' and again: 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' No doubt I had at different times heard the passages read which I quoted, and these, I believe, were brought to my remembrance, as expressed in the promise.

Thus the Lord was graciously pleased to make known to me His great salvation. The effects were wonderful indeed. Instead of constant grief and sorrow, I was blessed with joy unspeakable and full of glory; instead of despondency, I was begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; instead of continual terror and fear, the peace of God ruled and reigned in my heart. I could truly say with the Church of old, 'O Lord, I will praise Thee; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.' The Bible seemed to me to be quite another book from what it was when I was under the law. My meditation was then principally confined to the threatening portions of God's most holy Word; but now the promises flowed into my heart with a power and sweetness which I cannot express; and they all seemed to be my own, as though they were spoken to me. Faith was enabled to receive, appropriate, and apply them all to myself; as the Apostle says, 'All things are yours; . . . and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

The wonderful union subsisting between the Saviour and His Church, and which is so blessedly set forth in the Word of God under a great variety of emblems, was unfolded to my understanding and heart. The glorious truths of the everlasting gospel seemed to shine clearer than the sun. One text after another was continually opening to my mind, which afforded me such sweet entertainment, that I can never fully describe it. I seemed day and night to be favoured with communion with my ever-adorable and most merciful Saviour. I could say with the Psalmist: 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' I was thus indulged for about six months after my great deliverance. I do not think that I had a single doubt, or fear, or uneasy thought about my present or future state for that period.

As I appeared so happy, and my health greatly improved, it was thought that I ought to return to my music. This I willingly consented to, as I wished to oblige my parents, especially my dear mother. I again took lessons of Mr. Jacobs, and I had three pupils. But I soon found this employment irksome to me; yet I did not complain of it, as I thought I ought to do something. But it reminded me of the empty, vain, carnal associations I had been formerly accustomed to. I did not like to hear the sound of a pianoforte for some years: I used to think that my feelings must be something like those of a person who disliked and dreaded to pass the public house after being brought to fear God,

because it had been a source of temptation to him in former days. Such was then my case with respect to musical entertainments.

Although there was no profession of religion made in our family, yet my dear mother had taught me to kneel down at bed-time and say my prayers, which consisted in repeating the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, Addison's hymn, 'The Lord my pasture shall prepare,' and one of Dr. Watts's hymns for children, beginning, 'Why should I love my sports so well?' But when the Lord was pleased to charge the guilt of sin home upon my conscience, I did not like to repeat the Lord's Prayer, as I feared that God was not my Father; but after He had condescended to shed abroad His own precious love in my heart, as the fruit and effect of the forgiveness of sins, I could say indeed, 'My God, my Father, and the Rock of my salvation.' I soon began to find that forms of prayer were not sufficient for me; and I used to enjoy such wonderful communion with the Father and with His dearly beloved Son, as I can never describe. That promise was sweetly fulfilled to me, 'I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications.' I was favoured with such answers to prayer as often astonished me. Whatever I asked for, my gracious God was pleased to grant me. This blessed state of almost supreme happiness was, I believe, what is intended in Scripture by the former rain coming down in its season.

I well remember that after this I awoke one morning in what then appeared to me a most remarkable

state of mind. All my comfort and enjoyment was gone. I did not feel any sense of Divine displeasure ; it was not the guilt of sin ; but I had lost the presence of my gracious God and Saviour. Like the Church of old, I sought Him, but I could not find Him ; I called Him, but He gave me no answer. I wondered how it was. I had thought before that I should never have to mourn the absence of my best Friend. I knew that it was said of the Saviour, that, 'having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end ;' but I had lost the sweet manifestation of His love ; and the following scripture occurred to my mind : 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.' It was then suggested that I had been mistaken, that all my happiness was nothing but imagination, and that I never *had* drunk of the water of life, for if I had, I should not thirst again, according to the text.

I had no reply to make to this temptation, for such I believe it was, and I sank very low in my mind. I did not feel that condemnation which I had formerly experienced when under the law, but I had lost all that was dear and precious to me in this world and in that which was to come. The Saviour was gone, and I feared I should never enjoy His presence again. I thought all my religion had been a delusion. Surely I never had any interest in Him whom my soul loved ; if I had, I could not feel the distress I was now in. This lasted, I think, for

about a fortnight. I had no light upon my path ; all was darkness and obscurity. The Bridegroom had withdrawn Himself, and I could but mourn His absence ; and what was worse than all, I feared He would never return. But I learned by this deep trial that Satan can apply Scripture to God's tempted family. He did so to the Saviour Himself in the wilderness.

One day, when sitting alone, and musing on my wretched condition, I thought that I was in a worse state than if I had never known the Lord, and enjoyed His presence ; for to be for ever separated from Him who is the only fountain of life, light, and love, seemed to me far more distressing than anything that could happen to me ; when all of a sudden a ray of Divine light was darted into my mind, yes, it reached my very heart, showing me that the meaning of the text was this : He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst *for any other*. And this I have ever since believed to be the true sense of the passage. I could truly say that I did not thirst for any other water than that of which I had been favoured to drink. I wanted no other religion. I remembered that David, who had been so greatly indulged, afterwards thirsted for God, for the living God, even as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. And the Saviour blesses those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Thus I was led to see that it is the common lot of all whom the Saviour loves, to mourn His absence at times. When the Bridegroom is taken away from the children of the bridechamber, as to the enjoyment of His sensible presence, they cannot but fast in those days.

I do not wish for a faith that is empty of love. To be satisfied with notions about the Saviour, and yet not to be sensible of His sweet manifestations and His withdrawings, is, in my view, no good sign. I am sure that those who believe in, and love, the Saviour, cannot be satisfied when at a distance from Him. I could appeal to my own conscience that it was the enjoyment of the Lord's presence that I wanted, and that I did not thirst for anything else. Thus I was delivered from my great distress of mind. He restored to me the joy of His salvation, and I did again rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and believed that the work wrought in my soul was God's own work.

Some short time after this, I sank again in my feelings as low as before. I had been meditating about the forgiveness of sins, and the wonderful love of the Saviour, in laying down His life for sinners, and, what was more wonderful than all to me, that He should ever have been pleased to make known His amazing love to me, and that without any human instrumentality. It seemed so very astonishing, and yet I knew it was so. I could say with John, 'We love Him, because He first loved us.' While thus employed, this thought suddenly came into my mind—that I had been assured of an interest in God's great salvation, that my sins were forgiven me for the Saviour's sake; but this did not seem to be enough, that something more was wanting than the removal of sin from the conscience; that those who are saved must not only be freed from sin, but they must be all righteous. Christ

had indeed been revealed to my heart as a Saviour, but I knew nothing about positive righteousness. The way in which poor sinners are made righteous had not been discovered to me; and as the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God, I feared that the work in me was not perfect, and that after all I should come short of the kingdom of heaven. This suggestion sunk me very low indeed. 'What, after all that I have enjoyed,' thought I, 'to be mistaken! to be resting upon a false foundation, to perish for want of a perfect righteousness! Oh! this indeed is distressing beyond measure.' These overwhelming thoughts and feelings continued with me for some days. I had no one to whom I could speak about them, and I was truly miserable.

While earnestly crying to God that He would be pleased to perfect what I had hoped was His own work, by making me righteous, He graciously showed me that Christ could not be divided; that in receiving Him as my Saviour from sin, I had also received Him as the Lord my Righteousness. And from this, the Lord the Spirit kindly discovered to me that whoever receives Christ by faith into his heart, receives Him in all His covenant characters and relations to His people; that He is made of God unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. So that there is no such thing as receiving Christ in any one of His characters alone, but whosoever receives Him, receives *a whole Christ*. His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He comes with all the fulness of His Godhead, with all the fulness of

Divine grace. All the promises are in Him yea and amen, to the glory of God by us. Himself is the Alpha and Omega, the All and in all of a poor sinner's salvation. And as He had graciously assured my heart that I had an interest in this great salvation, I was fully persuaded that in possessing Him I had all that was necessary for me, for time and eternity, all needful grace here, and all the blessings of eternal glory hereafter.

This blessed manifestation made me as happy as before; I almost think, more happy than I had ever been. My heart was filled with love to my dear Saviour, and I could do nothing but bless Him, and thank Him, and praise Him, for what He was to me, and for what He had done for me. But this was all secret between this Almighty Saviour and me, a poor lost sinner, saved only by full, and free, and sovereign grace. The snare was now broken, and I was like a bird escaped out of the hand of the fowler. The enjoyment of this continued with me for some time.

Soon after, an event took place which was painful to my feelings. My mother was sent for suddenly to go into Somersetshire, to see her father, who was very near his end. A few days after her return he died. By his will he left to my mother much less than to her only sister, she having married in opposition to the wishes of her family. The interest was to be paid to her for her sole and separate use, and at her death the principal was to be divided amongst her three children. This arrangement made my father very angry, and was the source

of much unhappiness between him and my mother. Though I was very young, I deeply felt their disagreement, which continued and increased. I remember thinking of what our Lord says, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'

This daily cross has attended me until now, and will, I believe, continue to the end. Each follower of the Saviour is to take up *his own* cross. I have found it to consist principally in the following things :

1. My own sinful self is the heaviest burden I have ever been called to bear ; for though I am not left to a sense of unappeased wrath or unatoned guilt, yet I continually feel what Paul says, 'that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' I am continually prone to backslide from God in my affections, to depart from Him through the power of unbelief, to rebel against many of His dispensations towards me, to entertain hard thoughts concerning His ways ; in a word, there is so much of the old Adam nature in me and about me, that I can truly say, 'We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.' There is the carnality of the mind, the wandering of the thoughts and desires, together with a whole host of inward evils.

2. There are the infirmities of the poor body, weakness, sickness, &c.

3. There are the continual temptations of Satan, fiery darts, evil suggestions, and a great variety of secret workings which proceed from him.

4. There are the weaknesses and infirmities of the church of God, my dear brethren and sisters in

Christ. I do know something of what Paul means : 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' God's dear people are often remembered by me at the throne of grace.

5. There is the open enmity and persecution of the world at large. This is sometimes hard to bear ; but we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us.

6. The almost every day occurrences of life. Whilst we know that they are all appointed for us in infinite wisdom and fatherly love, yet I find that my stubborn will often produces much discontent within, and sometimes unguarded expressions are uttered, causing a sense of guilt and shame.

I think all these things together constitute our daily cross : and each of us has his own particular cross to bear.

I still continued to go to church with my mother whenever I had an opportunity, thinking that it must be right to attend the house of God : and I was sorry that I could not go more regularly. I used to wonder why the clergymen that I heard seldom, if ever, said anything in their sermons about the things that I had experienced.

Having learned the Church Catechism, the part about baptism struck my mind. The question asked the learner is 'What is the outward visible sign, or form, in baptism?' The answer is 'Water : wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Then 'What is the inward and spiritual grace?' Answer, 'A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness : for

being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.'

I knew indeed both from the Bible and my own experience that I was born in sin; and though I understood that I had been baptized in infancy, I knew by sad experience that I was not then regenerated, or born again. This used to puzzle me. Having a very high reverence for the Established Church and its ministers, I could not for a moment allow myself to think that they could be wrong, and yet I could not see how it was possible that they were right.

Another thing in the Catechism rested upon my mind. The child is made to say, 'I learn to believe... in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God;' and I wondered what was meant by *the elect people of God*. I used to go to church, hoping that this might be explained at some time or other; but I do not remember ever hearing anything about the doctrine of election. It was neither affirmed nor denied. It occurred to me that the Prayer Book must have been made from the Bible, and therefore I listened very attentively whenever my mother had time to read it to me, to hear if there was anything said in it about the elect people of God; and I soon found that this glorious doctrine shines like the sun throughout the whole inspired volume. I found that God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also their posterity, to be His peculiar people. He says, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth.' The four Gospels and the Epistles also affirm the same truth in

the fullest and clearest manner. This, through Divine teaching, led me into a deeper knowledge of the everlasting, immutable, discriminating love of God, of which I had been favoured to have so sweet a taste. What I had experienced I was constrained to believe, and therefore could now say with John, 'We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.'

Also the blessed truth concerning regeneration appeared to me to be quite plainly stated by our Lord in John iii, and in very many other passages; and I was enabled really to believe that through sovereign grace I myself was born again; as Paul says, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.'

Here again the Lord was pleased first to favour me with an experience of Divine truth, and then to shine upon His own work in me, by unfolding His sacred Word to my heart and understanding.

Some time during the year 1810, I became acquainted with Mr. W., an elderly gentleman, who had retired from business, and lived very near us. He was a bachelor, and a man of somewhat eccentric habits. At this distance of time I cannot recollect how I was first introduced to him; but I well remember his telling me that he went to church every day, and asking if I would go with him. He said he should like me for a companion, and I was very pleased to accept his kind proposal. I felt desirous of going to different churches, hoping that I might

hear something harmonizing with that teaching which the Lord had favoured me with. He said if I would go with him he would call for me every evening, which he did, and we went to different churches. I cannot remember them all. St. Lawrence, Jewry, and St. Antholin's, Watling-street, were among them; and as he knew of no church open on *Saturday* evenings, we went to the Tabernacle in Moorfields, where we used to hear Mr. Draper, a very old minister, the father of Dr. Draper, whom I afterwards heard at Spafields Chapel. Mr. W. was always very kind and attentive to me, but I never found anything spiritual in his conversation. I made a few attempts to tell him of what the Lord had graciously done for me, but he did not seem at all to understand it. He would talk on any commonplace subject on the way to and from church, and used to say I was a very good boy, and he hoped I should always be religious. We were generally at church before the rest of the congregation, and he would employ himself in finding the places in the books for the clergyman and the clerk.

I was continually looking out for spiritual good; for something descriptive of the Lord's dealings with my own soul; but, alas! I was constantly disappointed. There was much truth advanced from time to time, principally relating to the moral duties of man. The Saviour was sometimes spoken of, but I cannot say that I ever heard the work of the Spirit described, in convincing poor sinners of their sinful and totally helpless condition, and in revealing Christ as a Saviour to their souls; so that

I always came away unsatisfied. I used to tell my friend this. He would say, 'Oh! you will like it better in time.' But I could not feed upon such provision. Besides, in two or three months I became quite weary of the continual repetition of the same prayers. They seemed to me very dry; there was no springing well.

I have since been led to see that a form of prayer, however sound and scriptural, is deficient in this respect—it seems to do away with the necessity of the fulfilment of God's promise, 'I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications.' He says, 'I create the fruit of the lips;' and, 'The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.' Now, if words are prepared for us, and we are always to use them, what necessity remains for the fulfilment of the foregoing declarations? God forbid that I should find fault with the good men in the Church of England, who continue in the use of the form; this being a matter between God and their own souls. All I can say is that I found a form of prayer insufficient for my wants, and the continual repetition of it brought me into a state of bondage.

This I was obliged to tell my kind friend, and also that I could no longer accompany him to church. He seemed vexed and very sorry. I am sure he meant nothing but kindness to me; but I could not be contented with the form of worship which satisfied him.

I do not wish to attach any supposed sanctity

to a building; yet I think that a certain reverence should mark our conduct when in a place dedicated to the worship of God; that is, if it is really felt. I would not have anything assumed, but I do think there is a great deficiency amongst us as to this matter. My friend would talk aloud in the church about any indifferent subject. I recollect he used to say to me immediately at the close of the service, before leaving the church, 'Amen here's your hat,' as it were in one breath; and I felt grieved at such want of reverence.

My refusing to go any more with Mr. W. to church was another cause of displeasure to my friends. They were very angry with me, and said that I threw away every prospect of advantage through my obstinacy and nonsense; for they had no doubt that Mr. W. intended to do something handsome for me. It was in vain that I urged the plea of my own conscience and feelings. My father said it was all nonsense. My poor mother was much more gentle with me, though she was very sorry I could not see it right to continue to cultivate his friendship.

About this time I received from Mr. Jacobs, of whom I was still taking music lessons, a ticket of admission for four persons to a performance on the organ at Surrey Chapel, signed by the Rev. Rowland Hill. I had gone the two previous years to these entertainments, but now I felt a repugnance to them. I thought that a house devoted to the service of God should not be made a place of amusement; and I began to feel a dislike to instrumental

music being introduced into Divine worship. I do not think that organs can properly form any part of that worship which the Saviour says is required of those who are the true worshippers, which must be in spirit and in truth. And here I would take occasion to say that I now think that dissolving views, and lectures on scientific, philosophical, and other secular subjects, are altogether unsuitable to the places designed for God's service, and that the Almighty is thereby dishonoured.

Having such views, I declined using the ticket myself; and having some knowledge of a family who resided near us, and were fond of music, I sent it to them. One of the young people called a few days after to thank me for it, when we entered into conversation about churches and chapels. I remarked that I knew little about chapels (having been brought up with a prejudice against Dissenters), but that I had been to a great number of churches, and could not find such an explanation of Bible truth as would satisfy me. I said a little about what God had graciously done for me, when my young friend told me that I ought to go to *chapel*, for that I should find there what I was seeking after; that the preaching was very different from that usually met with at church. I replied that I wanted to find a minister who could describe my experience; and was told that I should find many such among the Dissenters, and that if I would go with them and try, they would have much pleasure in calling for me on Sundays, and occasionally on week-evenings.

I was very delighted at the prospect of hearing

what I had hitherto sought in vain ; and from this time a close intimacy commenced between the family and myself. My mother also became attached to them. I went with them to many chapels, and heard many preachers (I forbear mentioning names) ; and although I often heard what appeared to me much more scriptural and spiritual than that which I had been accustomed to hear at church, and though the extempore prayers were much more satisfactory to me than the form, yet I still found a deficiency. When a minister took a text, I could often see much beauty in it. Various heads of discourse were presented to my mind, and I could frequently trace out a sweet vein of experience running through the whole, that greatly delighted me. But I seldom, if ever, found the matter impressed on my own mind brought forth. Generally speaking, ministers preached the doctrines of the gospel according to their own standard ; in many instances they were very clearly and scripturally stated. Also I heard much that is usually denominated *practical* preaching. But the teaching of the Spirit, in a personal discovery of sin to the sinner, and in a revelation of Christ as a Saviour, was not often mentioned, or but slightly touched upon. And though I sometimes liked what I heard, there seemed to me a want of that peculiar power in which the kingdom of God stands,—a power to quicken from a death in trespasses and sins, to constrain a sinner to come to Christ, to produce faith in his heart, to apply the atonement to his conscience, and, in a word, so to reveal Christ as a Saviour, as to enable him to say with Paul, ‘I am crucified

with Christ ; nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'

I used to tell my friends this, and that I really could not find a ministry that seemed to satisfy my wants. They would pleasantly reply, 'Oh! you will like it better when you have heard more.' Sometimes I thought, Is it not presumption in me to suppose that all these good men are deficient in their ministerial work, and that I only am right? This would often produce a conflict in my own mind. I was afraid of thinking or speaking anything slightly of those who, I supposed, must be God's servants. I could appeal to the Searcher of all hearts that my desire was to be led in a right way, and therefore I waited with many earnest petitions for the Lord to show me what was His will concerning this matter. Not that I had any doubt as to the experience wrought in my heart being the work of God, and therefore I could not give it up ; but then I said, How is it that His ministering servants do not describe it? It is according to His own Word. These thoughts produced in me a very anxious and earnest wish that the Lord would so confirm His own work in me, that I might be enabled to give up all human teaching that did not accord therewith. Having drunk of the old wine, I desired not new, knowing that the old was better.

And thus I went on, becoming daily more and more dissatisfied with what I heard. At last I told

my friends that there were none in our day who preached like Paul. They said, this I could not expect, for that the apostolic age was peculiar; that I could not suppose the same power attended the preaching of the word now, as then. I replied, 'Yes, but it must be the same Spirit.' And I really began to fear that there were no sent servants of God now. I said, 'Perhaps there have been none since the Apostles' days.' My friends said they would lend me a book that would show me how greatly I was mistaken. This was Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. In this, they told me, I should find how many, who were really taught of God, had laid down their lives for the truth.

I was at this time in a manner almost ignorant of ecclesiastical history. I had indeed some vague ideas concerning the Reformation from Popery, derived from the History of England, though I had never thought much about it. But I found that John Rogers, vicar of St. Sepulchre's, who was the first burned at Smithfield in Mary's reign, Lawrence Saunders, of Coventry, John Hooper, bishop of Gloucester, and Dr. Rowland Taylor, vicar of Hadleigh, were all blessed with the same knowledge and experience of Divine truth as the Lord had, in rich mercy, bestowed upon unworthy me. In their letters from prison, as also those of Archdeacon Philpot, John Bradford, Careless, and many others, I found that rich, savoury, experimental knowledge of Christ, through the teaching of the Spirit, which was so precious to my poor soul. The Saviour's blessed name, which is as ointment.

poured forth, was abundantly known by these confessors of the truth. And thus I was led to see that there were others indeed who had received the same Divine teaching as I had been favoured with. In these I found real companions. It was like coming to the spirits of just men made perfect. I could say of them, as Paul says of Abel, that they, being dead, yet spoke. This was very encouraging to me, and tended much to establish me in the truth as it is in Jesus. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was the first book in which I found spiritual comfort, and I took much delight in hearing it.

And thus I went on for some time, waiting, watching, expecting, and looking for a display, in the public means of grace, of that almighty power which I had been favoured to experience in secret. I wanted to hear the voice of the Chief Shepherd in the preaching of the word; but I could not find that which I was so earnestly seeking for. I was frequently enabled, when alone, to realize that which is written by the beloved disciple: 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.' But in hearing the word, although, as I have already said, there was much truth, to me the true power, life, and savour were wanting, and this often produced in me great discontent.

I often wondered how it was, that, whilst I was led to see eye to eye with some of the ministers that I heard, as to doctrinal truth, still there was something deficient. It was the Saviour's voice speaking home to my heart that I was constantly craving. Without this, no preaching, however clear

and sound it may be, will ever satisfy a soul that is hungering and thirsting for the bread and water of eternal life.

But to proceed. I can never forget what happened one day. The late Henry Peto, Esq., calling at my father's shop, and making some remark which I cannot now remember, only that it was about religion, and attracted my attention, I said, 'I wish I could find a minister that could satisfy my mind as to the things of God.' Mr. Peto then began to talk to me about himself, and what God had done for him. He told me that he was a native of Surrey; that his father was a farmer; that he was apprenticed to a country carpenter at Leatherhead; that while he was there, he was brought under deep concern about the state of his soul; that he could not hear the church clergyman with any satisfaction; that his father was very angry with him because he went to chapel, and said, 'If that boy ever gets £20 in his pocket, the Methodist parsons will have it from him;' that, beside the expense of his apprenticeship and tools, half-a-guinea for a drawing-book, and 25s. for a case of mathematical instruments, he had never cost his father anything since he left home; that when his apprenticeship was ended, he came to London; and, having passed through many deep trials, God had been pleased to bless him very abundantly both in grace and providence. Having been much grieved at his father's displeasure, he did not let him know that he had gained anything until he possessed a thousand pounds.

But I must not write the life of my dear friend. What he said so astonished and interested me, that I was constrained to say, 'Sir, I did not know that anybody knew anything about such things besides myself.' He replied with a smile, 'My dear young friend, I hope and believe that I can say *I* do.' 'I am very glad,' I answered, 'to find that somebody else has been taught of God like myself, but I cannot find any minister that preaches these things. I have heard, as I am told, most of the eminent men in London, but I cannot find any of them that preach like Paul. There seems to me to be but very little or no power attending the word. I suppose that there have been none who could describe God's work in the souls of His people since the Apostles' days; at least, I cannot find any.' He said, 'I think I can take you to hear one who, you will say, both knows and preaches these things; and if you will be ready a quarter before ten next Lord's Day, I shall have great pleasure in calling for you, and taking you to hear him;' adding, turning to my mother, 'If you will allow me.'

I do not remember on what day of the week this took place, but I looked forward to the coming Lord's Day with much anxious concern. I had hitherto been disappointed with respect to hearing the word preached; but Mr. Peto's conversation had been so profitable to me, that my expectation was raised very high. From the savour and power which I had experienced, I felt assured that the minister I was about to hear would be such as I had been long and earnestly seeking after. These thoughts, desires,

and expectations occupied my mind almost entirely until the Sunday morning came.

I was ready and waiting for Mr. Peto before the hour he named. He was quite punctual. I do not remember our conversation by the way, my mind being taken up with thoughts about what I was going to hear. At last we arrived at Providence Chapel, Titchfield Street ; when and where I heard for the first time the late Rev. William Huntington. And I must say that when I heard him in prayer, a mingled feeling of astonishment, delight, and admiration was at once produced in me. The very solemn and impressive manner in which he pleaded the promises of God, was to me exceedingly sweet. And here I must remark that I usually found afterwards that Mr. Huntington's way of addressing the Almighty in prayer, was attended with such a measure of fervour, filial fear, and humble familiarity, as showed that he was favoured with very close communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, through the Divine anointing of the Spirit. Often have I heard him express my own feelings, wishes, wants, and desires, more clearly and fully than I could myself.

I do not remember the text from which he preached, but the whole sermon was accompanied with a power, light, life, and savour, which truly astonished me ; and while he was preaching, I could not help blessing and praising the Lord, that He had at last led me to such a ministry. Under this first discourse, I was fully convinced that Mr. Huntington was indeed a sent servant of the Lord. His ministry

was made manifest in my conscience, nor have I ever had a single doubt about it from that time. I told Mr. Peto that I did not think I should ever wish to hear any other ministry ; and I can truly say that I *never have* heard any of God's dear servants whose preaching has been made so useful to me. As I have said before, the Lord was graciously pleased to convince me of sin, and to reveal His pardoning love in my heart, before I had ever heard a work of grace described by any one ; but Mr. Huntington was made instrumental in shedding that Divine light upon what God had wrought in me, which confirmed it as being of His own operation ; as it is written, 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'

When hearing Mr. Huntington, I heard something more than man's voice. It was this, indeed, that I heard with my outward ears, but then I frequently heard more, even the voice of the Chief Shepherd, in, through, and by the word preached. I know it was His voice, by the power that attended it. 'Where the word of a King is, there is power.' It attracted my heart to Himself, His servant, His word, His ordinances, and His dear people. It was like manna to a hungry soul. I frequently enjoyed under the word the sweet flowings of that pure river of the water of life which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Oh ! how often has my poor, needy, thirsty soul been refreshed, comforted, encouraged, and strengthened by the instrumentality of this wonderful ministry.

I never heard a man who was enabled to trace

out the path of life, and that pathway wherein there is no death, with the ability and clearness which distinguished Mr. Huntington's preaching. He was most beautiful in setting forth the glorious doctrines of the everlasting gospel : such as a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of One God, the Incarnation of the Saviour, the Divine Personality of the Holy Ghost, God's everlasting love to His Church, His eternal choice of her in Christ ; the doctrine of original sin, and the universal fall of man in Adam ; full and free pardon and justification through the precious blood and perfect righteousness of a once crucified, and now risen and exalted Saviour, made known by the teaching of the Spirit, to poor, lost, ruined, and undone sinners ; the personal and effectual vocation of such by the power of Divine grace ; the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of the saints, and their final perseverance, as kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

He was wonderfully clear in showing the types of the ceremonial law as accomplished in and by Christ, who, as the eternal God, is the altar which sanctifies the gift ; as Man, the sacrifice that was once offered ; and as God-man Mediator, the High Priest of our profession. He used to show the deep mysteries of the word of God, the prophecies and their fulfilment, in a remarkable manner. But that which so endeared him to me and other poor lost sinners saved by free and sovereign grace, was the distinct, solemn, and masterly way in which he used to describe the work of the Spirit in the hearts of God's dear children, together with the trials, exer-

cises, deliverances, and sweet enjoyments, which they who are taught of God are sure to experience more or less. It is this which will, I believe, make the name of Huntington dear to the church of God while time shall last. In confirmation of this my opinion, I appeal to his invaluable writings.

Dear reader, you will not be surprised that I soon told my mother that I had found a pastor according to God's own heart, who could feed His people with knowledge and understanding; and that he was so completely after *my* own heart, that I really thought I should never wish to hear any other, and I earnestly begged her to go with me to hear him. She was a very dear, indulgent mother to me, and I do not think she ever refused me anything that she thought would gratify me, if it was in her power. I had no difficulty in inducing her to consent to my wish.

All this took place about a fortnight before the chapel in Titchfield Street was burned down. When I first heard of this calamity, it was a great distress of mind to me. I was told that Mr. Huntington had some thoughts of ending his days at Lewes, and preaching at Jireh Chapel there. This added to my concern. But when I heard that his friends had determined on making him a present of a sum of money sufficient to purchase the ground and to build a chapel, it rejoiced my heart indeed.

I think about a month elapsed before the City Chapel, Grub Street (now Milton Street), was taken for a Sunday afternoon service and a Wednesday evening lecture by Mr. Huntington. This good news made me truly glad; yet I was not without fear

that, as strangers, we should not be able to get sittings, but my dear friend, Mr. Peto, obtained them for us.

When the Sunday arrived, my mother and I went to chapel, taking care to be there early. I do not remember anything remarkable in the service, only that I heard as before described. I was anxious about my mother's hearing; and though when we returned she made no particular remark, as to whether she liked what she had heard, yet she promised me she would always go with me if I wished it. This I thought a great mercy, and was enabled to offer a tribute of thanksgiving to the Lord, as also to intreat that He would bless the word to my dear mother.

Another circumstance took place about this time, in which I saw the power of God kindly displayed in my behalf, beyond any expectation of mine. My father was induced by the persuasion of my mother and myself to go with us to hear Mr. Huntington. When he consented, I was surprised beyond measure, and very thankful I felt to the God of all my mercies.

Whilst recalling these recollections of the Lord's work of grace in me, it was suggested to my mind to omit in great measure an account of His *providential* dealings. This, I believe, sprang from my own pride and unbelief, and from the temptations of Satan. Moses says, 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no.' He

records the daily supply of manna, the miraculous flowing of water from the rock ; that the raiment of the Israelites did not wax old, neither did their foot swell. In the case of Elijah, the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening ; and when the brook dried up (many a brook have I seen dried up), a widow woman was commanded to sustain him, and a promise made that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain on the earth. There is also the woman with her pot of oil, sufficient to fill all the empty vessels. Again, we read how our dear Lord fed multitudes on what appeared an altogether insufficient supply. Last, but not least, there is Mr. Huntington's *Bank of Faith*. These and other such accounts were so brought to my mind, that I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself for thinking for one moment of suppressing the kind, gracious, and condescending acts of my dear Lord and Master towards His unworthy servant. How often has a providential supply, sent from an unexpected source by Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, refreshed my spirit ! Food, raiment, and the necessary comforts of life are peculiarly sweetened, when we can trace them as flowing from the love of the heart of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, towards us.

On Tuesday, 24th March, 1811, we all went to chapel in the afternoon. I locked the door of the house when we left home, and put the key in my pocket. On our return my mother saw that the door was open, before we reached it, and said to me, ' You

locked the door?' I replied, 'Yes.' She said, 'Your father and other people are gone in.' On going up stairs, we found that a strong box standing in a closet had been forced open, and more than £190 taken away, together with some rings and other articles of jewellery belonging to my mother. This loss was necessarily felt very deeply by us all; and what added greatly to my affliction was that my father blamed *me* as the cause of it. He said if he had not been such a fool as to listen to my nonsense, it would not have happened.

Many thoughts passed through my mind. I said to myself, 'How is it that the Lord has permitted this to happen?' We were engaged in His service, seeking His face according to His revealed will. And I thought of the promise made to the Israelites of old, that when they went up to Jerusalem to keep the Lord's feasts, no man should desire their land. All this was very puzzling to me. But the Lord was graciously pleased afterwards to make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. And in how many instances since, has He condescended to show me that He can make all things work together for good! Like poor old Jacob, I have often said, 'All these things are against me;' but, like him, I have been constrained to acknowledge that God hath kept me and fed me all my life long unto this day.

The news of what had taken place reached Mr. Peto the same evening, and he very kindly came to sympathize with us concerning our loss. My father would not see him. Mr. Peto told my mother that he would on no account wound her feelings, or offend

Mr. Hobbs, by what he was about to suggest ; but, as it was possible that the loss might cause inconvenience, he had thought of speaking to two or three friends, who, he knew, would very willingly join with him in making it up ; that, if it was accepted, it must be distinctly understood that it was done entirely on John's account, and that it should be considered as a present made to him. My poor father, when he heard of this, appeared very sullen, not at all pleased, and repeated that it was all my fault, and that of my friends. Mr. Peto kindly performed all he had promised, though my father said he did not want it, and never thanked him for it.

I have often thought of what I have now related, as being one of the first conspicuous instances of God's kind providential care over me, after He had condescended to reveal Himself as my God and Saviour. Many have been the times since, in which the same gracious Providence has in a remarkable manner supplied my necessities. He has never forgotten His poor unworthy servant, though, alas ! I have been too often unmindful of Him. I find that notwithstanding His great goodness towards me, unbelief will still continue to work ; but, blessed be * God ! it does not reign and rule. No, every renewed manifestation of the Saviour's love revives and restores that faith which is His gift, which works by love, and stands in His own almighty power, both to produce it, and to perform what it credits and believes.

I had been very much favoured from the time when the Lord was pleased to turn my captivity.

He put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness : I was indulged with much communion with the Father, and with His dearly beloved Son ; the word had been greatly blessed to my soul through the ministry of Mr. Huntington. But now there came a weaning time. I began to be exercised with a daily cross. Being naturally of a delicate constitution, my health began to give way from the close air of London, and I believe that I was much injured through improper medical treatment. I had hoped that my inward enemies, such as unbelief, impatience, discontent, together with all the members of the old man, had been entirely destroyed ; but alas ! I found that they revived again, and were still strong and lively. This caused me much grief. In addition, my home was uncomfortable. My father was unkind to my mother, and could never be reconciled to our going to chapel. He had always manifested a propensity to occasional intemperance, and it gradually increased. He never got thoroughly intoxicated, but would be continually taking small quantities, which made him irritable and quarrelsome. He began to say that my mother and I should not go to chapel any more, and spoke in a very unbecoming manner of Mr. Huntington and his hearers. This wounded my feelings very deeply. To be deprived of the privilege of hearing the word, seemed to me the greatest affliction that could befall me. I knew that God was my refuge, and that He alone could help me.

My father would commence on Monday morning, declaring that we should on no account go to chapel

any more. This he would repeat continually through the week, and I used to cry mightily to the Lord, that He would prevent him from hindering our going. The more violent my father was, the more earnestly I used to plead at the throne of grace. This continued, when I was at home, until the death of Mr. Huntington ; and, most remarkable to relate, *in no one instance* was my father ever permitted to carry out his design. I thought he was like Nabal, of whom it is said that his heart died within him ; for after storming and raging through the week, when the Sunday morning came, he was always quiet. He seldom left the house on Sunday, never indulged in any excess, but spent the day in indolence, and said very little to any one. But on the Monday morning he began afresh, calling himself a thousand fools for not keeping his word, and declaring that we certainly should *not* go next Sunday. And this, as I said, continued for more than two years. I used to bless and praise the Almighty for His great goodness to me ; so that between intreating the Lord for the future and thanking Him for the past, I was much occupied in secret.

And here I will not omit to relate, that, knowing that faith and prayer were the only means by which a poor helpless sinner like myself could prevail, I made a resolution to wait upon God seven times a day, like the Psalmist ; once before breakfast, twice between breakfast and dinner, twice before tea, once after, and at bed-time. I came to this determination, lest I should neglect seeking the Lord, the matter being so very important to me.

Not that I would recommend others to adopt such a practice, as formality in Divine worship has a legal tendency. Still, I found it profitable at the time. There was a good deal of legality in my feelings; for I used to think that I could call upon God with more freedom when *kneeling* before Him than in any other posture. But He has abundantly shown me since, that He hears the desires of the humble, that He will prepare their heart, that He will cause His ear to hear, whatever may be the position of the body. Solomon *knelt* before the Lord when He prayed; David went in and *sat* before Him; Abraham *stood* when God communed with him; and our dear Lord and Saviour *fell on His face*, when, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly. I too have known what it is to be so pressed out of measure, above strength, as to be constrained to throw myself upon the ground before the Lord. But in sickness I have found that the Lord does condescend to hear the cry that issues from a broken heart, when *lying* on the bed of languishing. So that it comes to this—we find that God is a Spirit, and that those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Oh! how often has He heard my secret desires when *walking* by the way. Even in the midst of company, I have often found my thoughts wander away from that which occupied others, to my gracious God. Yet I must own that I do love to present myself in secret before Him. Our Lord says, 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in

secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' This open reward is often seen in a cheerful countenance. Like Hannah, we come away, and our countenance is no more sad. Oh ! how many burdens have I been favoured from time to time to cast thus upon the Lord ; and to the honour of His truth and veracity, I must say that He has hitherto sustained me.

Soon after my first hearing Mr. Huntington, a circumstance occurred, which I wish to record to the honour of God. The friend who had recommended me to go to chapel, and who, while believing that Mr. Huntington was a good man and a servant of God, yet thought that he was too narrow and exclusive in his preaching, when she found that I was so attached to his ministry that I did not wish to hear any one else, observed that she feared I should become like most of Mr. Huntington's hearers, who were so bigoted as to think that there were no other ministers who preached the gospel with the same fulness and clearness that he did. I said plainly that I had never *found* any whose ministry was attended with equal power to my soul.

One day this friend invited me to spend the evening, as she wished to read a sermon of 'the Doctor's' to me. Mr. Huntington's most attached friends were accustomed to call him 'the Doctor,' so that I necessarily supposed the sermon I was to hear was one of his. Its title was, '*The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon.*' My friend had not read many pages before I remarked, 'This is not a sermon of the Doctor's.' She said, 'You must hear further

before you say this.' She proceeded; and after hearing some more, I said, 'This is not the Doctor's sermon.' She said, 'Don't be so hasty in deciding; let me read some more;' to which I replied, 'You may read as much as you please, but I am sure that sermon was never preached nor written by Mr. Huntington.' She said, 'Well, you'll hear to the end?' I said, 'Certainly, if you please.' When it was finished, she said, 'Now, what do you think?' I said, 'There is no thinking about it. What I have said I *have* said, and I am quite sure I am right.' She then said, 'You *are* right; but I really did not think that you could discover it was not Mr. Huntington's. Remember, I did not say he was the author of it; but I think the writer had as much right to be called "Doctor" as he.' Such an attempt to deceive me was unjustifiable; but I believe my friend really thought the sermon was so much like Mr. Huntington's, that it was mere prejudice and bigotry on my part not to receive its author as a sent servant of God.

Some short time before this, I had been invited to accompany some friends to hear a popular minister, who, they told me, was quite equal to Mr. Huntington. I am sure that I heard him without prejudice, for I was very desirous to find other servants of the Lord whom I could hear to profit; especially as this happened during the time when Mr. Huntington preached only on the Sunday afternoon. But, oh! with what different feelings did I hear Mr. C. Though I could not say that he advanced anything erroneous, yet there was a light,

flippant, bold manner about him, that I could by no means tolerate. He spoke of sacred things with such a want of reverence, that I really trembled while I heard him. I felt assured that the guilt of sin had never been charged home upon his conscience, that he did not stand in awe of the Almighty, and had never had an experience of the precious truths of the gospel which he attempted to set forth. He spoke of sin as being no matter of concern to those who believed in Christ. In a word, his ministry appeared to me to be altogether carnal.

After leaving, I told my friends all this, and much more ; yet, to oblige them, I consented to hear him a second time, as they said they were sure it was nothing but prejudice and bigotry that prevented my receiving him. But the second hearing was, if possible, more revolting to me than the first. I really felt that I was wrong in going again. The bold and arrogant manner he displayed in speaking of the things of God so distressed me, that I resolved I would never hear him again, and told my friends so. He was the author of the sermon which was read to me under the circumstances I have just related.

Oh ! how I blessed God for enabling me, through His teaching, to detect the difference between the preaching of a minister of Christ and that of a minister of Satan. 'Such,' Paul says, 'are false apostles, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.' And this man by his outward conduct afterwards made it but too manifest that he was a stranger in heart to the truths which he preached.

I have often reflected on this circumstance, and have felt truly humbled under a sense of the wonderful goodness and kindness of my gracious God, in not suffering me to be deceived by the false light displayed in the sermon which was read to me. Paul says to the Thessalonians, 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power.' It is this power attending the preaching of the word, that can alone make it manifest to be God's own truth. It matters not what we may hear, if the Saviour's voice is not heard speaking to our hearts; and this is known by the life it communicates and feeds, by the encouragement it affords, by the faith it works; in a word, poor sinners are thereby brought to say, 'It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh.'

Many have endeavoured to imitate this sweet, this most precious voice, but there never was, nor ever will be, anything that can equal it. The Church says, 'His mouth is most sweet.' His doctrine drops as the rain, His speech distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. It revives, renews, refreshes, and comforts the soul in a way that nothing else can; and poor sinners who have been quickened into spiritual life by this voice, can never be satisfied with any other.

I continued to be much favoured in hearing Mr. Huntington at the City Chapel, Grub Street. I remember two sermons which were very sweet and profitable to me; one from Ezekiel i. 20, 'For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels;' and the other from Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart also

will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.' That which I found so peculiarly precious in Mr. Huntington's ministry was, that in opening and giving the sense of the text, it described the teaching that I had received from the Lord, so that my own experience and God's most holy Word harmonized. It was not simply that peculiar gift of unfolding dark passages, for which he was so eminent, though this is very pleasing to hear; but it was that bright shining which discovers God's work in the soul; according to Paul: 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

My esteemed friend, Mr. Peto, would frequently call of an evening, and spend two or three hours. I found his conversation very refreshing and establishing. He had a large acquaintance with the Word of God, and was deeply taught in spiritual things. He could trace the work of God, begun and carried on in his own soul, very clearly, and would often speak with much feeling and tenderness of the Lord's goodness to him, both as the God of grace and of providence. I never enjoyed more sweet spiritual communion with any of the Lord's dear family than with him; and I know that he felt a close knitting with me in spirit, and was very fond of talking to me about the things of God. He kindly commenced lending us some of Mr. Huntington's writings, also some of Dr. Owen's. This tended to produce a strong

desire in my mind for the possession of spiritual books, and I was led to a remarkable method of obtaining money for the purchase of them, through what I believe was the hand of God.

As an orange-merchant, my father dealt in nuts. Those which had holes in them were separated from the sound ones, before selling them to the fruiterers ; and the children about would call for penny-worths or halfpenny-worths of those that were thrown aside, to use as marbles. They also inquired for the damaged chestnuts. These nuts were given to me, and I began selling them at a halfpenny a quart ; but the demand increased so rapidly, that I raised the price to a penny a quart, and occasionally even higher, and sometimes made as much as a shilling a day. It is by such simple means that God often works. Those who are rich in this world are too apt to undervalue such insignificant efforts ; but I must say that I believe the hand of a kind and gracious God was with me in this matter. It was the more remarkable that my father permitted me to do this, as he was generally angry with me about my religion ; but I believe the thing proceeded from the Lord.

With the money thus obtained, I commenced purchasing books. The first I bought was a quarto Bible, with marginal references, for twenty-five shillings. Wishing to possess *The Book of Martyrs* myself, I took it in, in a hundred sixpenny numbers, and had it bound.

Another providential circumstance I may relate. I have already stated that I had two or three music

pupils. One day a gentleman called, and inquired for me. He was a lieutenant in the navy, and had been recommended by the friends of one of the pupils to ask me to assist him with my judgment in the purchase of a pianoforte. I accompanied him to an instrument-maker's for that purpose ; and after selecting a piano, for which he gave a cheque for thirty-two guineas, I received, as a professional teacher, the usual commission of twenty-five per cent. Eight guineas was a great addition to my finances, enabling me to buy many more books,—Luther *On the Galatians*, Elisha Coles *On God's Sovereignty*, Toplady's *Works* in six volumes, Romaine's *Works* in eight volumes, Calvin's *Institutes*, a very old work by Perkins, who lived in Queen Elizabeth's time, and some others. I now felt myself quite rich in books ; and my dear mother read as much to me as time would allow.

I still continued to practise the piano, in compliance with the wishes of my relatives, though it did not afford me any pleasure ; and I went to no parties. A friend made me a present of the full score of Handel's oratorio of *The Messiah* ; and as I had studied thorough-bass, I employed myself in arranging the different parts for my own use, with the assistance of my mother, who read the notes to me. But I soon became weary of this work. The continued repetition of the sacred words of Scripture clashed with my feelings ; it seemed to me like breaking through that reverence which I felt for God's most holy Word. I do esteem it among my greatest mercies to be kept trembling at God's Word.

It occurred to my mind one day that I would not, and I ought not to retain the Unitarian books that had been given me by Mr. B. I thought of what we read in Acts xix. 19, 20. Having several volumes of sermons, I proposed to myself to sell them for waste paper; but then again I thought, I will not do this, lest any person should read them, and be ensnared by them. So, with my mother's assistance, they were burned, at a time when my father was from home. I think that those who fear God should destroy all books of an infidel tendency that they may have in their possession. No one can tell the amount of mischief often produced in the minds of young people, through reading erroneous theological works. Like the society of carnal professors, they are far more dangerous than such as are altogether worldly.

My mother possessed other books—novels, plays, and such like literature; and I induced her to consent to their being sold, and the proceeds laid out in the purchase of some more of Dr. Owen's works for me. His treatise *On Communion with God* was very much blessed to me. His description of communion with each Person of the Godhead, I found especially sweet and instructive. It is a work that I would recommend to the perusal of those who can say, like John, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.' The several acts of communion with each Person distinctly are very fully set forth. Also his *Exposition of Psalm cxxx*, I found to contain much deep, heartfelt, experimental religion. The various depths, out of

which the seeking soul cries to God, are very beautifully described.

On June 23rd, 1811, Providence Chapel, Gray's Inn Lane, was opened ; when Mr. Huntington preached two sermons from Haggai ii. 6-9. I heard them with great satisfaction. They were afterwards published. It will be found that they were very suitable for the occasion ; and the last clause, 'In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts,' was opened in a very sweet and experimental manner. I had been anxiously waiting for this event, longing to hear twice on the Sunday, and on Wednesday evenings ; and I must say, to the honour of God, that I more than realized what I expected. I thought myself richly fed indeed, when I could hear three times a week. The ministry seemed more powerful and experimental than ever. I found that the promise of God was abundantly fulfilled to myself, and, I believe, to others : 'I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.'

But this rich blessing was attended with an additional trouble. The opposition at home became still more determined, as there were more opportunities of hearing the word. But my gracious God did not forsake me in this trial ; for, as it increased, I was enabled to be more earnest in pleading with the Lord about it. I sought Him many times in the day, and my thoughts were almost continually occupied with it. I often sighed out, 'Lord, do not take away from me the blessed privilege of hearing Thy precious word ;' and to the honour of His name I must repeat

that, though the threatenings usually commenced on Monday morning, and continued more or less through the week, on no occasion were we ever prevented from going to hear. Sunday was always passed in silence.

Soon after the opening of the chapel, we made the acquaintance of an attentive hearer of Mr. Huntington, and she lent us in succession the twenty volumes of his works. The reading of them was very profitable to me. My dear mother's health was not very good, and I have often sat for hours by her bed-side, while she read to me. I loved to watch and attend upon her; and though she seldom remarked on what she read, yet I believe that God had commenced a secret work in her soul. The operation of Divine grace is often carried on as our Lord describes it in the parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.' The working of this leaven in a sinner's heart is often so secret as to be almost imperceptible, but it never fails in the end; according to Paul's declaration, 'He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' If my reader is brought to be a seeker of the Saviour, oh! let him take encouragement from this. The Saviour never breaks the bruised reed, nor will He ever quench the smoking-flax. Let us not despise the day of small things. And this leaven of Divine grace must continue to work until the whole church is leavened.

I used to be very fond of stopping at the old book-shops, and getting my mother to read the titles of

such books as might interest me. I found, by conversing with the different booksellers, that my *Book of Martyrs* was an abridgment of Foxe's original work, that *that* consisted of three volumes folio, entitled *Acts and Monuments of the Church*; and I could not feel satisfied till I possessed a copy. One day I found what I wanted. I was assured that it had been the property of Sir Isaac Newton. It was in rather a shattered condition, but quite perfect as to the contents. There had been three editions of Foxe, two of which were in black letter, and the last printed in 1684. The copy which was offered to me, and which I bought for the small sum of £2 10s., belonged to the last edition, which is the best. This work, when in good condition, usually sold for eight or ten guineas, being very scarce. I had the volumes bound, which cost me £2 8s. I lost no time in exchanging my first *Book of Martyrs* for a work I wished for, having often heard Mr. Huntington mention it,—Whiston's translation of Josephus.

On a Sunday morning, early in the year 1812, Mr. Huntington preached from Hebrews x. 34: 'For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' First he commented on the preceding verses: 'But call to remembrance the former days,' &c. He drew a comparison between the sufferings of the primitive church and those of our reformed church in England during the time of Queen Mary and the ~~Stuart~~ and showed that it is through much tribulation that the church of Christ in all ages must enter

into the kingdom of heaven. He then pointed out that those who belonged to the Lord might, [in all probability, be called again to suffer from the Roman Antichrist. After the sermon, he said that a public meeting had been held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate Street, when a petition to Parliament was agreed to, against what was called Catholic Emancipation; that a committee had been formed to carry out this object; that the secretary had applied to him to assist in it, and that he did hope that all who loved the Saviour and were loyal to the throne and institutions of the country would sign the petition, which was now ready at the chapel, and that a person would attend in the vestry through the following week, to receive signatures. It was then thought unnecessary for women to sign public petitions, as the men were supposed fully to represent them.

Having been made acquainted in some measure with the antichristian, intolerant, and persecuting spirit of Rome, through reading of the sufferings of the martyrs, I felt a very lively interest in this matter; and after intreating the Lord that I might be successful, I asked my father to allow parchments for signatures to the petition against Catholic Emancipation to lie on the desk in his shop; to which he consented, saying to my mother, 'Jack is always up to something or other.'

I sent to the secretary, and obtained the parchments and a packet of papers containing the form of the petition, which I circulated as much as I could, and embraced every opportunity of asking those who

came into the shop, to sign it. We obtained nearly three hundred signatures. The petition was signed by more than three hundred thousand persons, when it was presented to the Peers by the Lord Chancellor, and to the Commons by the four City members.

In those days Protestant loyalty was more in fashion than it is now. The feelings of the public were more alive to the true interest of the nation, than, alas ! I fear they are at present. May the good Lord in mercy revive His work amongst us in the midst of the years !

The bill that had been brought into Parliament to give the Roman Catholics equal privileges with the Protestants, passed through its several stages in the Commons to the third reading, but when it was moved 'that this bill do pass,' the Speaker, the Hon. Mannors Sutton, gave his casting-vote against it. The bill was consequently rejected ; but still the Romanist party were greatly encouraged, as they considered they had achieved a triumph.

I do not wonder that the world at large, in these liberal times, should advocate the universal right of all the subjects of the crown to equal privileges ; this is quite natural. But that the members of the Established Church and the great body of Dissenters should be so blinded by the god of this world, as to support the interest of Antichrist, this is sad indeed. The argument usually urged in favour of Catholic Emancipation is that all men have equal civil rights. But if, as in this case, certain persons are compelled by their religion to persecute their fellow-men, is it not right to withhold from them the power of so

doing ? Shall we say that wolves and tigers have an equal right to prowl about the fields with sheep ? This might be true, if it was not the well-known propensity of the wolf to destroy the sheep. Now this is exactly the case, as it respects Romanism and Protestantism. And do not these facts fully appear at the present time ?

In September of the same year, Buonaparte, having subdued all the continental nations, entered Moscow at the head of his army, but was very soon obliged to leave it, in consequence of the Russians setting it on fire in several places. With the disastrous retreat of the French, all who are conversant with the history of that time will be fully acquainted. Mr. Huntington, who was one of the most loyal subjects of the British crown that I ever knew, manifested the greatest interest in this tremendous affair. In speaking of it from the pulpit, he applied Isaiah xiv. 12 to Napoleon, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations !' Speaking very beautifully of the Lord's preserving care over us, he believed that the British isles are referred to in Isaiah xlii. 4, 'The isles shall wait for His law ;' and that the prayers of God's people had been heard and answered, during that terrible war in which England had been so long engaged. He said he felt deeply for the suffering Russians, and hoped for a liberal collection that morning, as he wished that some houses might be built at Moscow, to be called *Providence Row*.

That dear man of God was a very close observer

of Divine Providence. He used to say that those who watched and acknowledged the hand of God, would never want a Providence to watch over them. There was a liberal response to his appeal, as I understood that more than £400 was collected. But the generosity of Mr. Huntington and his people was strikingly remarkable. He preached a free grace salvation to lost sinners, and it is written, 'The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.' How fully was this verified in his own experience.

About this time I was able to buy Owen *On the Hebrews*, the best edition, 4 vols. folio, for which I paid six guineas. This is a work I very highly prize. I bought also a folio volume of sermons, and several other works by the same author. I used to think books were my greatest earthly treasure.

During this year and part of the following, we had frequent intimations that Mr. Huntington's ministerial career was near its close, both from his observations from the pulpit, and several temporary attacks of illness, during which Mr. Lock used to preach for him. I can never forget the anxious fears I experienced, that I should be deprived of what to me was the greatest privilege and delight I was favoured with. I well remember his preaching from Ps. civ. 3. This discourse was afterwards published, entitled, '*The Apartments, Equipage, and Parade of Immanuel.*' Also from Ps. xviii. 9, 10; Amos ix. 13; Zech. i. 18-20. And many other texts I could mention, which were made especial blessings to me, and to which I can truly apply the words of Moses in Deut. xxxii. 2.

My worst fears and those of many others were at last realized. On June 9th, 1813 (it was on a Wednesday evening), he preached from Rev. iii. 3, 'Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.' This was one of the most remarkable sermons I ever heard him preach. The chapel was very full, and many of his hearers thought it would be his last. After service, he was asked in the vestry to publish it; to which he replied, 'I will, if I have time; but I believe my work is done.' Yet he had appeared stronger than usual. On the following Friday morning he was taken ill, and the next Friday went to Tunbridge Wells, where he died on July 1st, and was buried at Jireh Chapel, Lewes, in the same vault with his beloved brother and fellow-minister, the Rev. Jenkin Jenkins; and an epitaph, written by himself, was inscribed on his tomb. Vast numbers of his sorrowful hearers, from London and other places, attended his funeral.

Called with a holy calling, richly endued with the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit, favoured with a very large number of seals to his ministry, raised by Divine Providence from a poor station in life to a position of comfort and affluence, William Huntington, like John Bunyan, was a very striking illustration of what Paul says in 1 Cor. i. 26-29, 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the

world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in His presence.'

If the reader of these recollections should wish to know why I so highly prized and greatly esteemed the ministry and writings of Mr. Huntington, my answer is, that though I have heard good men preach the everlasting gospel, I never heard any, whose testimony was so abundantly manifested in my conscience, and blessed to my soul, as his. I used to hear the voice of the Chief Shepherd through his ministry. He spoke as one having authority from God. His preaching came not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. He was a sincere lover of the tried sons and daughters of Zion, ever ready to feed the poor of the flock, and was pre-eminent for largeness of heart and liberality to the poor.

I cannot fully express the sorrow of heart which I felt when the Lord was pleased to call him home. The thought that I should never hear him preach again, seemed to be almost overwhelming ; and such, I believe, was the feeling of very many of the Lord's people who had been favoured to hear him, throughout the length and breadth of the land. His copious works have been blessed to thousands, and are a standing monument of the triumphs of free, sovereign grace.

At his death, the congregation at Providence

Chapel waited with much expectation to hear Mr. Chamberlain of Leicester. An account of God's dealings with him had been published by Mr. Huntington, in a little work, entitled, *The Love of Christ always the same*, Part III. From this, together with different remarks made by him from time to time, most of us were led to conclude that he believed that Mr. Chamberlain would, in the providence of God, be his successor in the ministry. I can well remember my feelings before going to chapel to hear him preach for the first time. It was on a Wednesday evening. I was enabled to plead earnestly with the Lord that He would condescend to be with His servant, and that he might be made manifest in the hearts and consciences of those who were about to hear him; that the spirit of Elijah might rest on Elisha. I did not expect to find the same amount of life, power, and savour as I had been accustomed to; but I did hope that the great Head of the church was about to favour us with a pastor according to His own heart; and was enabled to be very earnest in asking this blessing of the Lord.

When my mother and I arrived at the chapel, we found it quite full,—a Sunday congregation. When Mr. Chamberlain engaged in prayer, I heard him as a good man indeed, but I felt that he was, like David, shut up, and could not come forth. I did beg the Lord to help His servant. He took for his text the first three verses of the 61st of Isaiah, but he seemed to be deeply exercised with a spirit of bondage. What he said was every way scriptural,

but it was unconnected ; there was no opening up of the text. I was led to look for its fulfilment, to a certain extent, in the ministry of the preacher ; but, though fully satisfied that he was a good man, and I could not help believing that he was a sent servant of God, yet the sermon greatly disappointed me. He did not preach, I think, more than forty minutes ; and by his manner I felt sure that he was deeply disappointed himself.

Several years after, this dear man of God told me, when dining with him at Mr. Bensley's, that he had thought himself a great man before the Wednesday evening of which I have been speaking, but that he had never been a great man since. No, he was indeed blessed with a humble spirit. I do not think that he generally enjoyed much liberty in preaching, but he was very earnest in the Lord's work, and his ministry was suited, and much blessed, to those who were experiencing deep soul trouble. Many a poor, tried sinner was brought forth out of darkness into God's marvellous light, through the instrumentality of his ministry.

But to return. Mr. Lock had assisted Mr. Huntington when he was ill or out of town, for some years. He was originally in the Countess of Huntingdon's connection, but had been attracted to Mr. Huntington's ministry by the power that attended it to his own soul. He went one evening after service into the vestry, and spoke to Mr. Huntington, who afterwards said that he felt drawn out in love to him, and it was as if a voice said, 'Take Lock to help you.' From that time Mr. Lock used to

spend one day in every week with him, and preached whenever he was required. He became the settled minister at Providence Chapel, in connection with Mr. Burgess, who was another friend of Mr. Huntington's. They preached alternate Sundays, and Mr. Chamberlain preached four Sundays in each year.

I continued with my mother to attend the chapel regularly, never going anywhere else while I remained in London. I heard Mr. Lock as a truly gracious man. There was no order or method in his preaching; he did not *open* his texts. I used in my mind to compare his sermons to a bunch of beautiful flowers, sweetly scented, but thrown together without any order. I felt a sweet union of spirit with him. I seldom got much under Mr. Burgess's ministry. He was a good man, but much afflicted both in mind and body, and he was greatly annoyed and distressed with an irritable temper. He would sometimes in the pulpit read letters he had received from persons opposed to him, which was unprofitable both to himself and his hearers. He deeply felt any real or supposed unkindness. Yet, notwithstanding all his natural fretfulness, I rejoice to say that he died happily in the Lord. 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.' And we know that all the perfection and uprightness of the saints, together with the peace they enjoy, is in, through, from, and by Christ.

Though I continued to attend the chapel, yet I experienced much spiritual barrenness. I was

surrounded by many trials. Missing that ministry which had so richly fed my soul with knowledge and understanding, I ardently longed for the presence of the Chief Shepherd. This was not altogether withheld from me, for I found Mr. Huntington's writings very precious. I endeavoured, as it were, by increased earnestness in seeking the Lord in private, to retain my former enjoyments. Like the Spouse of old, I held Him fast, and would not let Him go, and sometimes could say with Jacob, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' And here I found that with all this earnestness there was a mixture of legality, something of self; for if, through any unavoidable circumstance, I omitted to call upon the Lord at either of the appointed times, I was dissatisfied with myself; while there was a good deal of self-gratification in my own regularity.

My home was very uncomfortable from the opposition of my poor father, and during the first part of the year 1814 my health greatly declined. Dr. Babington of Aldermanbury was consulted, and he told my mother that he did not think I should live more than nine or ten weeks, that country air was the most likely thing to do me good; and he declined to prescribe any medicine for me.

It was on the 2nd of June in that year that I went by myself into Somersetshire, home circumstances not permitting my mother to go with me at that time. The journey occupied thirty hours. Mr. Bellamy, the husband of my mother's sister, met me at Bridgwater, and drove me to

his own house at Sandford, about two miles from that place. And here I must not omit to mention that peculiar providence of my gracious God and Father, which was over me at this time. My aunt, Mr. Bellamy, and all their family, received me with the greatest possible kindness. Knowing the state of my health, not a thing was omitted which they thought calculated to promote my comfort. If I had been their own son, it would have been impossible for them to do more for me.

After I had been there a few days, Mr. Bellamy wished to introduce me to a very eminent medical practitioner at Taunton, who consequently visited me at Sandford, and after a lengthened examination as to the state of my health, gave an opinion quite at variance with that of the London physician. He said that I was naturally very delicate, and that I had been much reduced, but he saw no reason why, with proper medical care and nursing, I should not recover. In a few hours after this visit I became much worse. I fell into a state of torpor. If I was spoken to, I gave a rational answer, but immediately forgot that I had been spoken to. I altogether forgot the days of the week, and knew no difference between day and night. My mind and memory seemed entirely lost. I did not think of anything, and seemed quite unconscious as to all spiritual concerns. I continued in this state, I believe, about a fortnight. My case was thought strange, and several doctors from Bridgwater and Taunton visited me.

The first thing of which I have any distinct recol-

lection, was the recurrence to my mind of some passages from Luther *On the Galatians*, which I had heard read just before leaving home. The very clear distinction which that great reformer makes between Law and Gospel, came one day to my mind ; and I was enabled to believe that the Lord had graciously delivered me from the bondage of the one, and brought me into the glorious liberty of the other. This afforded me sweet consolation ; and I became conscious of all persons and things by which I was surrounded. My head had been shaved and a blister applied, of which I knew nothing, and I could not help wondering how the time had been passed during my absence of mind. I believe everything that medical skill and the most devoted affection and attention could do, had been done for me. I cannot forbear to remark that Mr. Bellamy would not allow his men to come into the house to have any meal, but he paid them out of doors, lest they should disturb me. This must appear the more remarkable when I come to relate other circumstances connected with his conduct towards me. I cannot attribute it to natural relationship. No, my dear reader, it was the hand of my gracious God providing for me the most suitable situation in which I could have been placed, and He shall have all the praise.

All the doctors said that I never could have recovered, had I not had the advantage of fine country air, and a very large and lofty sleeping apartment. When I was getting better, my mother arrived, which added to my comfort ; though my aunt and her family, the governess, and the servants, all showed me the

most unremitting attention. As I understood afterwards, I was never left quite alone.

While I was recovering, I had some sweet meditation on a sermon I had heard preached by Mr. Huntington, from Amos ix. 13. The manner in which he opened his text was brought back to my memory ; the mountains and hills, the grapes and the sweet wine afforded me matter for very pleasing thought. After the season of darkness which I had experienced had passed away, I found that the Lord was as kind and gracious as ever, my comforts and enjoyments were restored to me, and I had abundant evidence that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. I believe that this blessed realization of God's truth and faithfulness greatly promoted the recovery of my health. 'He sent His word and healed them : ' yea, He says, 'I am the Lord that healeth thee.'

Though very weak when I rose, I regained strength rapidly. I had brought some of Mr. Huntington's books with me, which the governess was very kindly willing to read to me when I wished, though, poor thing, I fear she did not understand them ; yet she would often express her admiration of them. As soon as I was able to bear it, Mr. Bellamy commenced driving me out every day, which I very much enjoyed.

I had another uncle, my mother's half-brother, John Evans, who lived at Spaxton, five miles from Bridgwater. He was very kind and attentive to me through my illness. On my recovery he went with me to Taunton, and generously paid the doctor's bill,

which seemed to afford him much pleasure. He also said to me, 'John, your recovery is like a resurrection from the dead, and I should wish to make you a present. What would you like best?' I replied, 'Uncle, there is nothing in the world I should so much wish for as Mr. Huntington's works.' He said, 'What will they cost?' I answered, '£12 to non-subscribers.' When we got back, he gave me the £12, saying he had much pleasure in doing it. I could not help feeling that this was a remarkable display of the hand of God; for I had often earnestly desired to possess these books. My uncle had no knowledge of Mr. Huntington, only he had often heard me speak of him.

In dismissing this part of my narrative, I desire to acknowledge the great goodness of God, in inclining the hearts of my relatives to show me such marked kindness. I have always looked at these circumstances as tokens for good, evidences of God's watchful eye and special care over me, and to Him be all the praise.

I think it was in September that I returned home with my mother. I embraced the earliest opportunity of spending my uncle's kind present in the purchase of Mr. Huntington's works, which I esteemed as a great treasure. I bought also his other writings not contained in the twenty volumes.

I found the congregation at Providence Chapel greatly diminished. The ministry of Mr. Lock and Mr. Burgess, though highly esteemed by many, did not satisfy the majority of Mr. Huntington's hearers. I believe that most of the poor of the flock,

that waited upon the Lord, knew that it was His word. But there were many who had sought and found entertainment in the very extraordinary gifts bestowed upon Mr. Huntington, which were largely displayed in the opening of dark texts, and in his extensive acquaintance with the sacred Word of God. Many of these persons were altogether discontented with the more slender gifts of the good men who succeeded him; though I believe that most of those who could be satisfied with the sincere milk of the word, often found a feast of things. We went nowhere else, except occasionally to hear Mr. Wilkinson at the Haberdashers' Almshouses, Hoxton, on a Sunday evening. We had been recommended to hear that truly gracious servant of the Lord by my friend Mr. Peto, who highly valued his ministry, which, though simple, was very sweet and savoury.

In addition to the narrative here broken off, some few particulars relating to the commencement of Mr. Hobbs's ministry are found in the following letter :—

Fair Mile, Cobham, September, 1826.

To the much honoured, greatly revered, and highly favoured ambassador of the King of Zion, the Rev. Mr. Oxenham, John Hobbs most affectionately wishes abundance of grace, mercy, and peace, 'from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness,

and the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

My very dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your favour dated Lewes, September 8th, and allow me to offer my very sincere thanks for the kind advice it conveys. I feel that its contents are weighty and important, and have found it sweet to spread the matter before the Lord. I must observe that I have long been favoured to commit my ways unto Him by earnest prayer and supplication, to ask counsel of Him, and seek direction from Him: and to the honour of His Divine veracity be it acknowledged, He has never permitted me to seek His face in vain. I have been rather peculiarly favoured of late, in pouring out my heart before Him; and what I am most earnestly desiring, is, not so much to judge from any outward appearances, either encouraging or discouraging, but rather to trace the Divine operations, teaching, and anointing of God's most Holy Spirit in my own heart. When at times I am enabled to enter into the everlasting, discriminating, unparalleled love of my ever-gracious God and Father, so as to feel its sweet and precious influence, my heart melts under the Divine impression that He should have loved me with an everlasting love, chosen me in Christ to eternal salvation, and blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him; that, in the execution of

His own eternal purpose, He should have been pleased to call me forth with an holy calling when very young, to separate me by His grace from all my natural relations and friends, to teach, instruct, and chasten me out of His law ; and finally to bring me to sit down at His ever-blessed feet to receive of His sacred words, and to be found clothed, and in my right mind. He washed me in His most precious blood, gave me the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, shed abroad His own everlasting love in my heart, and condescended to give me the sweetest tokens, manifestations, and assurances of His Divine favour. These things, enjoyed in the sweet experience of them, and traced by the eye of faith up to His own everlasting love, will, my dear Sir, form a theme of eternal praise, when all the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon their covenant Head, when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.

But to return to the subject of your letter. Allow me to observe, with all becoming respect, that it does appear that my dear friend has received rather a mistaken impression as to my anxiety about being settled over a people. I know that the human heart is deceitful above all things, and I often think my own is the most deceitful ; but my ever-gracious Lord and Saviour is pleased to indulge me to make very free with Him. He has commanded me to give Him my heart ; and how sweet do I often find it to intreat that He will take it and form it for Himself, that He will condescend to reign supreme in

my affections, to keep my will in a state of submission to His own sovereign good pleasure, and never permit me to seek after that which He has not appointed to bestow. In tracing these things, I sometimes find that faith is greatly encouraged, because the Lord knows that I have no control over my own desires; and I have generally found that when I have been permitted to desire anything contrary to His will, the holy and ever-blessed Spirit suspends His Divine operations, particularly at a throne of grace; shyness and distance are produced; nor can the soul get near to the Lord, so as to unbosom, pour out, and make known its desires unto Him.

Now, quite the reverse of this has been my happy experience of late. Although I have very frequently been pressed out of measure, beyond strength, yet there has been no wrath, guilt, or despair working within; but the Lord has often said, 'Peace, be still;' has unfolded the precious love of His heart, and indulged me with such a sweet sense of His Divine approbation, that faith has joined her Amen to that precious promise, 'The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Yet my dear friend will believe me, that even those endearing manifestations do not free the soul from its concern about many things. Nor do I wish they should; because by these things I am kept earnest at a throne of grace, diligent in pleading before the Lord, very watchful of His kind and gracious hand, and tender in observing the inward checks and encouragements, withdrawals and mani-

festations, contractions and enlargements, which are experienced : ' Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.'

But I am still wandering from my subject, to which I now return. May I intreat the indulgence of my dear friend, not while I attempt anything like self-justification, but simply lay before him a correct account of the way in which my ever-gracious God and Father has been pleased to lead me as it respects the ministry.

In the year 1814 I went to live near Bridgwater in Somersetshire*, where I heard no preaching, nor

* With reference to his sojourn here, he elsewhere remarks : ' I have since thought that my having been received into the family of Mr. B., was something like the children of Israel going into Egypt. God kindly provided a refuge for them there ; and He sent me to Spaxton when my home had become exceedingly irksome to me. The Israelites found the provision which they needed there, until the time came appointed by God for their removal. Then He was pleased to stir up their nest ; and the Egyptians made their bondage so heavy, that they were constrained to cry to God for deliverance, and He brought them forth from the iron furnace with a high hand. Such was, in a measure, my case.'

Again : ' I went to church once or twice, but found the service so dead, that I made up my mind not to go any more. Some, who have blamed me for staying at home, have pleaded the Apostle's words : " Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." But I think this passage is not always rightly understood. The word *yourselves* does not, I think, intend the world at large. God's family are a chosen generation ; for though spread over the whole space of time, they are reckoned as one generation, having, in a spiritual sense, the same Father and mother. God is their Father, and the heavenly Jerusalem their mother. Therefore they are but one generation, one family, one nation, one kingdom, under one Sovereign, one rule, one govern-

had I any Christian friend to commune with. Here the Lord was pleased to impress my mind for several years that He would in His own good time send me forth to speak in His great and holy name. In the year 1823 I visited London, where I met Mr. Vinall at the house of our esteemed friend Mr. Peto. It

ment. Now, if I go to a place of worship, and do not find that the preacher is a spiritual minister, and cannot trace the family features in any of the congregation, I do not think that the expression *yourselves* is applicable to such a body; and therefore, if I stay at home, I do not act contrary to the Apostle's injunction. Indeed, I have always found that if the public worship does not feed, it starves the soul. Where there is not life, it must be death.'

'From time to time I had many invitations to visit different families in the surrounding neighbourhood; but I made a point of declining them. When God was graciously pleased to put His fear into my heart, I felt constrained to forsake my worldly acquaintances. His Word is very plain about this matter, so that he may run that reads. He says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." And the Saviour says, speaking of His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." I do not mean that I think it desirable that the Lord's people should so withdraw themselves from the world, as, like the Papists, to shut themselves up from all intercourse with it. Such a practice is contrary to what our Lord speaks in His address to His Father concerning His family: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." What I mean is, that, when the Lord is graciously pleased to give to any, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is of God, that they may know the things that are freely given to them of God, such persons will find it to be for their advantage not to associate *unnecessarily* with the world. If I may speak for myself, I find that the society and conversation of worldly persons are irksome. They have a tendency to bring on a spirit of bondage, to separate between God and the soul, to suspend communion with Him, and to deaden the affections to, and desires after Him. Real Christianity does not foster a sour or morose disposition, nor will it ever lead any to neglect the precept, "Do

appears that Mr. Peto had had impressions on his mind as to my being called to labour in the Lord's vineyard, even before it had been brought upon my own mind ; but he never communicated it to me, nor did I ever name it to him, or to my beloved mother. Before our going to hear Mr. Vinall, I was requested to engage in prayer, when the same impression came upon *his* mind ; and after a conversation with Mr. Peto, he (Mr. Vinall) on the following morning asked me whether I had ever felt any impressions as to my speaking in the Lord's name. He drew out all my feelings upon the subject, and with much kindness and affection advised my watching the Lord's hand.

Soon after this, I received two pressing invitations from a Mr. Westbrook, the trustee of a chapel at Hounslow, to speak at that place, as they found it difficult to get the word ministered among them. I cannot describe the exercise of my mind for some time, but my dear friend will enter into my feelings. Many fears of rushing forward in presumption, much

good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." But it will keep us at a distance from the world in spirit, and from its general amusements and pursuits. It is written, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God ; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God."

'I had no Christian friend to converse with about the things of God. This I often used to wish for ; but I must say, to the honour of His faithfulness, He often condescended more than to supply this deficiency, by granting me a little communion with Himself. And, after all, Divine teaching is superior to all human instruction. This I have often been favoured to find. Not that I would have it supposed that I undervalue the appointed means of grace. No ; God forbid ! I only mean that the Lord can, and sometimes does, fulfil His own purpose in some other way.'

darkness in my own soul, and at times an irresistible impression that I must go, agitated my mind ; till the good Lord was pleased to decide the doubtful point, by applying in a very sweet and powerful manner the 16th ver. of the 71st Psalm, 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God ; I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.' I simply told the Lord that if He would condescend to be with me, I desired to be devoted to His service, that all the glory might redound to Himself ; but if not, I begged I might not be permitted to presume in future. Here faith was proved to be the substance of things hoped for ; for on the 27th September, 1823, I went to Hounslow with my valuable friend Mr. Peto, when the good Lord gave matter for two discourses from the before-cited portion of His most holy Word. On this occasion, a dear friend, the late Mrs. Westbrook, who, I have no doubt, is now with the Lord, was closely united to me in spirit, and remained so ever after.

The chapel was then supplied by three other persons and myself ; and the congregation increased on my Sabbath from thirty or forty to at least two hundred persons. Many pressing invitations were given me to settle in that place, and a house and garden, the property of Mr. Westbrook, were kindly offered me, but I could never see my way clear to settle there.

On the 2nd of the following November, I received an invitation to speak twice at Mayford in Surrey ; and in the evening of the same day for the first time at Cobham, where I have since continued, in con-

nection with other places. The following December and January I supplied Mr. Vinall's lecture in London, and in February I visited my mother (who then resided in Somersetshire), in consequence of her experiencing severe indisposition, when I told her that it was my firm impression I should never be settled at Cobham. This impression has ever since continued. Since my first speaking, the good Lord has opened more than fifty different places to me, and a few persons here and there have been gathered by the word. In many of them very pressing invitations have been given me to settle—at Brentford in Middlesex, at Richmond, Chertsey, and Woking in Surrey.

I take the freedom of troubling you with this account, to show that no anxiety has been, or is, manifested on my part to be settled over a people, until the good Lord shall be pleased to make it quite plain. In the first two years I was called to speak four hundred and eight times.

On the 18th September, 1825, I received a letter from Chichester, informing me that I had been given out to speak at that place on the following Sabbath, as it was known I was going to Brighton for my health. I spoke from 1 John ii. 27, after which I proceeded to Brighton and Lewes. On the feelings expressed by the friends in these places I forbear making any remark. With my different visits to Chichester you are fully acquainted. The most earnest solicitations have been made from the first by the friends at that place, that I should settle among them, which solicitations have increased to the present

time : and I have often admired their affection and ingenuity in contriving means of inducement. But I have always been uniform in telling them that he that believes shall not make haste ; nor have I given, nor can I give them any promise, until my kind and gracious Lord shall be pleased to instruct me in His sacred mind and will.

On one occasion, about six or seven years since, when under a very deep exercise, the Lord was pleased most sweetly and powerfully to assure my heart from Exodus xxxiii. 14, 'And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest ;' and more recently from Isaiah lviii. 10, 11, 'If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day : and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones : and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.' These exceeding great and precious promises I call in a peculiar manner my own ; and faith sometimes is strong enough to take them in her hand, and plead them before the throne ; nor has the great Author, eternal Finisher, grand Centre, and glorious Object of faith, ever turned a deaf ear to her humble, but earnest and importunate suit.

But I return once more. When I first spoke in London, certain friends expressed a very strong desire that a chapel should be taken for me ; but others, with whom I have had the happiness of being more intimately acquainted, rather wished to wait and watch the Lord's hand.

After referring to a disappointment connected with Founders' Hall Chapel, the letter proceeds—

I began to think that it was not the Lord's will that I should speak in London ; but immediately on the back of this, Staining Lane Chapel presented itself. My mind has been brought into a very great strait, attended with much pleading before the Lord that I might not be permitted to act contrary to His sacred mind and will. I have been induced to say that I desire to leave it here—that if the Lord opened the door for me, and gathered a people together, I could at present feel free to speak among them. Further than this I have not engaged myself by any promise. Here, then, I desire to stand upon my watch-tower, till the Lord's mind and will shall be fully known. After much self-examination, I do feel that the Lord has graciously kept me from connecting my own natural feelings with that dispensation of the gospel which He has been pleased kindly to call me unto, and I do most earnestly hope that I shall be favoured with an interest in the prayers of my dear friend.

I do not recollect that I can say anything more at present, but express the very sincere desires of my heart that the good Lord will bless you and keep you, that He will be very gracious unto you, and cause His face to shine upon you, that He will lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and give you peace ; that you and yours may ever be under His watchful eye and His paternal care ; that He will spare you long as a blessing to His church and people ; that your soul may be as a watered garden, and as a spring of water, whose waters fail not ; that

you may be favoured with many endearing visitations, precious manifestations, and sweet discoveries of the everlasting love of Jehovah, in His eternal choice of His people, in the gift of His dear Son, and in the precious outpouring of His most Holy Spirit, so that you may dwell on high, and be indulged with many sweet views of the King in His beauty, and of that land which is very far off. That these, with all other new covenant blessings, may abundantly rest upon you and yours, is, my dear Sir, the very earnest desire of him who begs to subscribe himself, yours in the bond of everlasting love,

JOHN HOBBS.

AFTER his becoming the settled minister at Staining Lane Chapel, where he first preached November 5th, 1826, and was ordained to the pastoral care of the church November 16th, 1829, Mr. Hobbs's life was outwardly an uneventful one. Had he been permitted to complete his narrative, he would have had much to tell of the varied workings of God's providence, and the gracious instruction communicated to him thereby. But these secret operations of the Holy Spirit on his soul could be related by none but himself; and the Lord, in the mystery of His wisdom, has seen fit to seal up from his attached congregation and others, much which, in their view, might have been profitable to the church. Enough, however, has been written by him to serve as one more testimony to be added to that of the great cloud of witnesses,

who have proclaimed from their own experience the goodness and mercy of the Lord.

He continued to minister in Staining Lane for forty-four years, with the exception of a short interval, when, in consequence of alterations in the arrangements of the Haberdashers' Company, to whom the chapel belonged, the congregation removed to another place of worship. Through failing health, his labours were frequently irregular, and though his whole heart was in his work, he found himself compelled in the autumn of 1870 to relinquish his Sunday evening service, though still continuing his week-evening lecture. He preached for the last time on Wednesday evening, December 21st, apparently in his usual health; but the intense cold of that night was too much for him, and doubtless produced an aggravation of his complaint, from which he never recovered. He rallied after the first attack several times, and week after week indulged the hope that on the next Sabbath he should be able to go up again to the house of the Lord. But his work in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ was done. Once more only, on the first Sunday in May 1871, was he enabled to meet his beloved flock, and that only as a worshipper. On this occasion he for the last time took his accustomed place at the Lord's Table, and with great difficulty and in much suffering he spoke for a few minutes during the administration of the sacred ordinance.

On returning home, he expressed his pleasure and thankfulness that he had been allowed to

carry out the desire of his heart, but appeared to have no presentiment that he would meet his people no more. On the contrary, his health again improved, and he still hoped that after a change of air he should be able to resume his work.

On Sunday, May 28th, he was much engaged in dictating a letter to his congregation, according to his usual custom. But it was left unfinished; for on the evening of that day he was seized with an attack of acute bronchitis, followed by pleurisy. It seemed that God mercifully hid from him that it was the messenger of death; for on many occasions he had spoken of his dread of the suffering which he feared he must go through when he drew near his end, considering the nature of his complaint. He gave no intimation that he felt that his life was so nearly closed, and to all appearance, before he was aware that he was approaching the banks of Jordan, the waters were divided before him, and he was safe on the heavenly shore.

His redeemed spirit returned to God who gave it, on the 1st of June 1871, and on the 7th, on which day he would have completed his 75th year, the mortal body was laid in Kingston Cemetery, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

PASTORAL LETTERS.

I.

Bognor, August 19, 1853.

My dear Sir,— I go to Chichester to-morrow evening, and return on Monday morning, if the Lord permit. I am deeply sensible of the solemn importance of speaking to poor sinners of those things which accompany salvation. The work appears to be so great that I am constrained to say with an apostle, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ but when I am in my right mind, I am brought to know that the work is not mine, but the Lord’s. So that if I could possess all the united gifts and abilities in the world, they could not aid in performing the Lord’s work; and, on the other hand, it is impossible that any deficiency in the poor instrument should hinder it. Though I had all knowledge, so that I understood all mysteries and all prophecies, if I had not God’s love in my heart, if God the Holy Ghost was not pleased to speak by my mouth, it would be nothing.

I have often thought that if our poor little cause at Staining Lane had been merely man’s affair, it must have been overthrown long ago; but because it is the Lord’s cause, He has been pleased to take care

of it. How futile are all human efforts to do the Lord's work in any other way, or by any other instruments than such as He is pleased to make use of.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

II.

Bognor, August 26, 1853.

My dear Sir,—I thank you for your kind letter; and I bless God that both you and the brethren have continued remembrance of me, as I also have of you. I love you all in the Lord. I believe that the many afflictions through which I have been called to pass have been a means of endearing His people to me. If we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation. Each member in the mystical body of the Saviour has its own personal and peculiar union with the Head; they that are joined to the Lord are one spirit. It is this joining which is the foundation, yea, which is the sum and substance of that oneness which we have in Christ: spiritual life from His fullness is communicated to us by the quickening operation of His Spirit, by which operation we receive Himself, in the gifts of faith, of hope, and of love; for He is our life, our joy, our peace, our righteousness, and our whole salvation. Now where this saving work is wrought in the hearts of many persons, they are all united to Christ, and must and shall be united to each other; and 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

shall' ever 'be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

With our united Christian love, I remain, my dear Sir, your companion in the path of tribulation, and in hope of eternal life,

JOHN HOBBS.

III.

Bognor, September 1, 1853.

My dear Sir,—Mercy and truth be with you.

I still prove the truth of the Saviour's words, 'If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.' There is no state or place that can exempt us from this.

I have been thinking much of that grief, that sore, with which I have been exercised for many years—it is a subject in which my dear friend will sympathize with me. It is a sort of indefinable agitation, concern, or fear. It is not that slavish fear which is engendered by an application of the law to a sinner's conscience, by which sin is discovered; it is not a servile fear of God the Father, for I have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption; it is not a dread of the Saviour, for I love His presence; nor is it a fear of God the Holy Ghost, for

His sweet communion charms my soul,
And gives true peace and joy;

nor can I say that it is the fear of death, for the guilt of sin is purged from my conscience, and death has no other sting. I am not afraid of the elect angels, nor of the saints, for I know that they love me, because I feel that I love them; it is not either Satan

or the world that I dread, for nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ.

You will say, 'What is it then?' First, it is a sinful fear, derived from and mixed up with unbelief. It questions the truth and faithfulness of God. It is a rebellious fear, as it opposes His will,—and yet it is not an opposition of my will against Him, for to will is present with me, the spirit indeed is willing,—but it is the rebellion of my sinful nature, it is an undue anxiety, it is the feeling of all natural occurrences too deeply. Desponding thoughts are injected by Satan into the mind,—I say the *mind*, not the will, for I would reject them; not the heart, for they have no place there, for I love the Lord, and would love Him more. I believe, also, that these trying feelings are much promoted by a derangement of the nervous system, which puts the whole bodily frame out of order. The only remedy for all this is the Saviour's presence, and that '*Fear not, it is I*,' continually repeated with a Divine power to the heart by Himself. The means is, constant, fervent, and effectual prayer.

With our united love to yourself and all the brethren, I remain yours affectionately,

JOHN HOBBS.

IV.

Bognor, August 4, 1854.

My dear Sir,—Love and peace be multiplied.

I have been thinking much of my dear friend, and of my other dear brethren and sisters in Christ. You, ~~the~~ myself, have been called to do business in deep ~~the~~ but we have been favoured to see the works

of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. You are the subject of many changes in your own feelings; but He who hath loved you with an everlasting love changeth not. If my dear friend is favoured with comfortable feelings, so that his mind sweetly rests upon the Lord, and he enjoys peace through believing, that enemy who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, will watch every opportunity to distress him. This he will do by injecting into his mind light, vain, trifling, carnal thoughts. And when he has gone as far this way as he may be permitted, not as far as he would, he will raise the cry, 'Samson, the Philistines be upon thee!' We then arise to shake ourselves, as heretofore, but, alas, alas! we too often find that our locks have been shorn, and our strength has departed from us for a season. Now the enemy changes his mode of attack, and seeks to depress the mind with all that is 'dismal in this world, and in the world to come.' He tells us that God hath forsaken us, that we shall be an easy prey—and so indeed we should, did not the Captain of our salvation, our wonderful Advocate, stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from him that would condemn his soul. For after we have groped for a time where there seems to be no light, that blessed Sun of righteousness who enlightened us at first, again shines into our prison-house: we hail His return, melt under His genial influence, hope revives, peace is restored, and a cry proceeds from the heart which reaches the very throne of the Most High, 'O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.' This is sure to be answered sooner or later

—and never too late—with one of His matchless *Fear nots*. Oh! how does the heart rejoice again to feel the irresistible power of His all-conquering love. We blame, we chide, we condemn ourselves for our folly, especially for our unbelief, whilst He forgives, pardons, cleanses, and heals us; never failing to assure us that, having loved His own that are in the world, He loves them unto the end, and that He will never behold sin in Jacob or perverseness in Israel; that, whatever we may be in our own eyes or in the esteem of others, He saith, ‘Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.’

I have been going in and out in this path for the last forty years, and to the present moment. I have no more strength and no more wisdom than when He first put me into it; but by the grace of God I am what I am. Brethren, pray for me, as I do for you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. The good Lord bless my dear friend. So prays his companion in the path of tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

V.

Bognor, August 11, 1854.

My dear Sir,—Believing that you and my other dear brethren and sisters in Christ will be desirous to hear of my welfare, through the Lord's goodness I am enabled to inform you that both my dear wife and myself are deriving benefit from this change. I have been again favoured to prove the faithfulness of God, in His bringing me through the services of ~~last~~ Lord's Day. I went to Chichester in weak-

ness, and in fear, and in much trembling ; but the Lord God was pleased to blow the jubiles trumpet. This I know by the effects of which I heard afterwards. O, my dear friends, what a mercy it is to be nothing, that the Saviour may be all in all !

I do trust that the Lord is with you in your gathering together in Him. He saith, 'According to the word that I covenanted with your fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you : fear ye not.' I am persuaded that the Lord has been with us at Staining Lane. We have found the path to lie through the wilderness ; and all wilderness blessings and wilderness mercies are from above ; the wilderness itself cannot produce them. We have had the Lord's presence in the cloudy pillar, which cloudy pillar sets forth dark dispensations ; and we have had His presence in the pillar of fire, representing His bright shining even in the darkest night. Fire not only enlightens but also warms ; and the hearts of many of us have sometimes burned within us with fervent desires after, and with sincere love to, the Person of our adorable Saviour, whilst He has opened to us the Scriptures. The hidden manna has been sweet to our taste, whilst the refreshing streams of the river of the water of life, flowing from Himself, have often revived our poor, needy, dry, and barren souls.

May He continue and enlarge the displays of His boundless love and free grace, if we are favoured

to meet again in His holy name. 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' is His own gracious declaration; and He hath also promised to put His fear into our hearts, that we shall not depart from Him.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. That the good Lord may still bless, keep, and preserve you, is the earnest desire of yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

VI.

Bognor, August 18, 1854.

My dear Sir,—May the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush ever attend you, and all my dear brethren and sisters in Christ at Staining Lane.

We were, through the Lord's unmerited goodness, favoured with His presence at Chichester last Lord's Day. I heard of some who had been exercised with dark and knotty experiences, who were relieved from their perplexities; things which they could not understand seem to have been made manifest to faith; and many were enabled to set to their seal that God is true indeed. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

I have not felt quite so well this last week, suffering weakness, as I believe, from the intense heat. The day was warm, and the chapel unusually full. I know, my dear friends, that all that I have and am, body, soul, and spirit, are in the Lord's hand. I am not my own, I am bought with a price. To spend and be spent in the service of so kind a Master is a privilege indeed.

On my return to Bognor on Monday morning,

I found my dear wife suffering from a sprained foot and severe pain in the knee, which confines her to the house at present, so that we found it necessary to send for our daughter, who reached us in safety yesterday. But who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Every fresh trial furnishes an errand to a throne of grace; and although we may be, as it were, beaten down, pressed out of measure, above strength, so troubled as not to be able to speak, and the mouth of prayer may be closed for a season, yet the Spirit of life in our hearts is a springing well, which must and shall rise again above all opposition. This well-spring of life, like Jordan of old in time of harvest, overflows all banks and impediments; it draws the heart and affections to the Person of the Saviour, producing a secret delighting in Him; it revives the work of faith, restores the joy of His salvation, renews Divine consolation, and leads us by faith to a foretaste of that rest which remaineth to the people of God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
So prays yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

VII.

Rottingdean, September 8, 1854.

My dear Sir,—May the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush rest upon you and yours.

You will, I am sure, be glad to hear that through the Lord's goodness both myself and Mrs. Hobbs are

better. I therefore intend, if God permit, to be with you on Lord's Day, the 17th. And may the Shepherd of Israel condescend to feed His people, that the poor of the flock that wait upon Him may know that it is the word of the Lord. His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. This reward is all of grace, and intends Himself revealed in the hearts of needy sinners: 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' And the work that is now before Him is to gather together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad.

My earnest desire is that the good Lord will be pleased to pour into all our hearts His Spirit of supplications, that we may pray for each other, that we may bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

VIII.

Bognor, August 10, 1855.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from that Friend who loveth at all times, and sticketh closer than a brother.

You will all be glad to hear that, through the good hand of our God upon us, we arrived here in safety on Monday, and through His great mercy my health is improving.

I awoke this morning at four o'clock, and my first thought was concerning the little flock at Staining Lane, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made me an unworthy overseer. It was accompanied with the

following text : 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you : fear ye not.' And I do really believe that this gracious promise hath been fulfilled in our experience ; for although we are very low in our own eyes, and not very high in the esteem of professors, yet has the Spirit of life, of light, of love, of power, and of a sound mind been known amongst us by His benign influences. We have been favoured to know Him as the Spirit of supplications and as the Spirit of adoption ; He has operated as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord ; and how sweetly has He sometimes comforted our poor hearts under the severest trials ! Blessed be God, this gracious Spirit is still with us, and shall never be taken away from us. True, my dear friends, like myself, are often saying, 'The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me.' His comforting operations are indeed often suspended, but His Divine presence shall never be withdrawn ; for He dwelleth with us, and shall be in us.

That you, my dear friend, and all who love me, and whom I love for Jesus' sake, may receive abundantly of the Spirit of revelation and understanding in the rich knowledge of Him, is the earnest desire of yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

IX.

Bognor, August 17, 1855.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you. In addressing my dear friend, I feel that not

only himself, but many others also, who love me for the Master's sake, will rejoice to hear that He still condescends to be with His poor undeserving servant.

Oh! how does a full, free, and complete salvation suit poor helpless sinners. It is free, as it flows from the everlasting love of God; it is complete, as finished by the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus the Saviour; and it is full, as revealed in the hearts of poor sinners by God the Holy Ghost. All the blessings that accompany salvation, and which are essential to it, flow to us from God's free, sovereign grace alone, without either worth or worthiness on our part.

Jesus saith, 'Ye must be born again.' Now this new birth is God's work wrought in us, and that without anything done by us. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' It is a new creation; and no creature could ever assist in producing itself. The begetting, quickening, and bringing forth, are all of God; it is He that hath made us new creatures in Christ, and not we ourselves.

Repentance unto life is necessary to salvation, and this repentance also is God's own gift (see Jer. xxxi. 18-20). Jesus gives this repentance unto Israel, and it is joined with the forgiveness of sins.

Furthermore, we must be all washed in His precious blood, if we ever enter His kingdom: 'If I wash thee not,' Peter, 'thou hast no part with me.' His righteousness revealed to, and put on by faith, is another of those things which accompany salvation:

no acceptance at the marriage-feast, without the wedding garment. And that faith, without which it is impossible to please God, and through which all these blessings are received in the heart of a poor sinner, is God's own gift, and flows only from His grace.

Once more,—all that we ever know, or can know, believe, experience, or enjoy, of His everlasting love to us poor, lost, ruined, undone sinners, is from Himself alone. We live, because He quickens us into life; we repent and turn to Him, because He turns us to Himself; we believe to the salvation of our souls, thus giving glory to Him, because He works this faith in our hearts, and grants us renewed supplies of the spirit of faith from that fulness that is in Jesus; and we love Him, because He first loved us. Thus there is no room for boasting. All the benefit is ours, and all the glory shall be His. So say all my dear friends at Staining Lane, who are favoured to know these blessed realities for themselves.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

X.

Bognor, August 24, 1855.

My dear Sir,—May the eye of the Lord ever be upon you, and His ear open to your cry. I received your kind letter yesterday morning, and I thank you for it. We were favoured with a time of refreshing in breaking bread last Lord's Day, but I felt much exhausted for two or three days after; now, through the Lord's goodness, I feel stronger.

O, my dear friend, how sweet is a full and free salvation to such poor needy sinners, when it is

revealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That ever-blessed Spirit, as a Divine Person in Jehovah, is interested in all the covenant love, covenant undertakings, and covenant engagements of the three glorious Persons from all eternity. One with the Father and the Son, He knoweth all the deep things of God. In the work of creation He moved upon the face of the waters, and gave life to all animated beings. He dwelt in Adam before the fall, as the Spirit of life, love, wisdom, and holiness. He inspired the scriptures of the Old Testament, and sealed its precious promises in the hearts of old testament saints with His heavenly unction, working in them that faith whereby they saw and believed their accomplishment. He filled the humanity of the Lord Jesus with His immeasurable fulness; and from that glorious fulness He will supply all the members of the Saviour's mystical body with spiritual life, down to the end of time.

As Christ is the sum and substance, the All and in all of a sinner's salvation, so the adorable Spirit is He who works in us all the things that accompany salvation. He quickens us into life, produces every grace that is ever brought forth in our hearts, and by His sacred influences He moves, revives, restores, and refreshes His own work from time to time, as we often find it at a very low ebb, in a very languishing condition, yea, almost, if not altogether, out of sight. It seems at times as if all spiritual sensations, motions, feelings, yea, even desires, were gone. But, blessed be God! this is not so; for that faithful Spirit still is, and ever shall be, in our hearts

as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life.

Thus all the church in Christ, joined to Christ, being one spirit with Christ, shall live in Christ and with Christ to all eternity. He saith, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' Now this life is discovered in us, and to us, by innumerable secret operations of His Spirit, differing widely as to measure and degree; but whatever is His work in us must be known by this, that every operation hath the principle of spiritual life in it.

That you and all the dear people at Staining Lane, whom I love in Christ, may be favoured with an abundant measure of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is the earnest prayer of yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XI.

Stockwell, November 9, 1855.

My dear Sir, Friend, and Brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you. I do hope, the Lord enabling me, again to bear my feeble testimony concerning an all-precious Saviour on Sunday morning. Be not thou therefore ashamed of this testimony. It is the greatest honour, highest privilege, and richest favour that we poor sinners can enjoy, to have this testimony borne in our hearts by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself.' He gives Himself to us as our portion, reveals Himself in us as our salvation, and assures our hearts that we are precious in His sight, whether in life or in death, in sickness or in

health, on the mount of communion or in the deep waters of affliction.

It is this, my dear friend, that constrains us to love, value, and esteem Him above all others. And all this flows richly, fully, freely, and abundantly from His all-sufficient grace, of which grace Father, Son, and Spirit are the only fountain, Jesus is the only channel of communication, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us the source of all Divine operation and heavenly influence.

I do not feel equal to stay all day, but I hope to break bread in commemoration of the Saviour's dying love. Earnestly desiring that the Lord will enable both yourself and the rest of His dear family to pray for me, I remain, affectionately yours in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XII.

Bognor, August 15, 1856.

My dear Sir, and companion in the path of tribulation,—Mercy and truth be with you. After a trying journey, through the good hand of our God, we arrived here in safety on Tuesday. As I lay awake in the night, this precious portion of the Word was dropped into my heart : ‘Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.’ What a mercy that I am not my own ! By Adam’s transgression I became sold under sin, the captive of Satan, a slave to sinful self, and under the power of death ; but everlasting Love paid the ransom provided by itself to Divine Justice. Thus the chief of sinners

is Christ's, by His own eternal choice, by covenant union, by purchase, and by the most glorious conquest that ever was, or will be, achieved over sin, over an obstinate will, which through grace is brought to submit, and over a nature that is entirely alienated from God.

To glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are His, is to believe in the Saviour with that faith which is His own gift, and ascribes salvation, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, to free, sovereign grace ; to take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord ; to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified ; for self to be nothing, and for Him to be all in all. It is easy to speak all this, but nothing less than an almighty power can ever realize it in a sinner's experience.

You must excuse the brevity of this note, and with my kindest love and earnest prayers for all the dear friends, I remain, yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XIII.

Bognor, August 29, 1856.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you.

I believe that yourself and my other dear friends at Staining Lane, whom I love in the Lord, will be glad to hear from me, as I also should be to hear from them. What a uniting principle is God's love put into the hearts of poor sinners ! It was the Father who loved us in Christ, chose us in Christ, gave us to Christ, and blessed us in Christ from everlasting. It is the Father's love that draws us

poor, needy, sensible sinners to Christ in time. How sweetly He smiles upon that blessed image of His dear Son which He forms in our hearts! 'The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me.' Christ manifests His love to us, by giving us to believe that He laid down His life for us. Faith's view of the death of Christ, as it is made applicable to ourselves by affording knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins, does sweetly humble, break, and melt our poor hearts. Having much forgiven, we do indeed love much ; and this forgiveness I stand in need of all the day long. And it is the Spirit of love who reveals, discovers, and makes all this known in our inmost soul. As Christ is the life, fountain, and substance of every grace, so the holy and ever-blessed Spirit, in His benign influences and operations, is the well-spring of life, light, love, joy, and peace within us ; nor can these blessings ever be found anywhere or in anything else.

Yes, my dear friend, it is this precious love, thus made known in the hearts of His dear children, which unites the whole family in heaven and earth in one. We are taught of God, yes, constrained, and that by an irresistible power, to love one another. This is that love which is the bond of the covenant, the bond of all perfectness, and the bond of all true spiritual union ; it is the root and spring, the life, sum, and substance of real religion. Oh ! that my poor heart could believe more, feel more, experience more, enjoy more, and live more in conformity to this wonderful love. But blessed be God for the foretaste, however small ; the fulness is yet to come.

I have engaged to preach at Chichester, the Lord enabling me, the next two Sundays, and I do hope that my dear friends may be enabled to help together in their prayers to God for me.

And now, my dear friend, I commend you, with all the dear people, to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us inheritance among them that are sanctified. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XIV.

Eastbourne, March 14, 1857.

My dear Sir,—It is the love of Christ to yourself and to all my dear friends at Staining Lane, which constraineth me to send you these few lines, wishing much health of soul and body.

Beloved in Christ Jesus, it is by the grace of God that I am what I am. I have been unwillingly compelled to decline all invitations to preach here at present, as I do not yet feel equal to any fatigue. My dear Lord and Master knows that if He was pleased to enable me to declare, according to my measure, the unsearchable riches of His grace to poor sinners, it would gladden my heart, and I should desire to ascribe all the glory to Himself, to whom alone it is due. May He enable me to say from the heart in this matter, and in everything else, Not my will, but His, be done.

If it be His will to make use of me as an unworthy instrument amongst you a little longer, I shall rejoice therein. I want to tell you some-

thing more about His name, person, precious blood, all-sufficient righteousness, fulness of grace, and matchless love, all of which are wonderful beyond comparison. Brethren, ask His ever-blessed Majesty that I may be given to you and continued among you, if it be for your joy and furtherance in the gospel; and you know He hath said, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XV.

Eastbourne, August 25, 1857.

My dear Sir,—I address you in the Lord, together with all at Staining Lane, whom I love in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us and shall be with us. Grace unto you, mercy and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have just received an account of the end of our brother W——, from his daughter. From my first acquaintance with him, I always felt persuaded that he was blessed with life in his soul, though called to walk in much darkness. Now, however exercised about myself, I have usually been favoured to believe that in whomsoever I can discover some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, all such shall certainly obtain the salvation which is by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore when I hear that my brother was enabled to yield up his spirit into the hands of his Saviour, this is just what I expected, both in respect of him and also all those who

through grace are made partakers of spiritual life, though their several shades of character, measures of faith, and experience may differ as much as their countenances. For as every natural man exhibits the image of fallen man, so every new creature in Christ displays the image of Christ. The different parts or lineaments are variously shown. Some are favoured with a larger measure of faith, others with much meekness, humility, godly sorrow for sin, &c., but all are blessed with life; and the two most striking features are God's fear and God's love in the heart. Remember, they are not man's, but God's.

But I must not run on. Through the Lord's great goodness, my health is certainly improving; and I do hope that if it be His good pleasure to spare me a little longer amongst you, His dear people, He will condescend to make the ministry more and more savoury, unctuous, powerful, and useful to your souls, that Himself may receive all the honour and all the glory.

And now I conclude with the words of the Apostle's request: 'Brethren, pray for us.' My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XVI.

Eastbourne, August 28, 1857.

My dear Sir, Friend, and Brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. Amen.

I must apologize to my friend for neglecting to

acknowledge his kind letter in my last, but my mind was occupied about the end of friend W——. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. They are *His* saints. Their sanctification is not of themselves, either in whole or in part; it is the God of peace who sanctifieth all His family. Sanctification stands in that difference which everlasting love has made between them and others. Loved in Christ, chosen in Christ, blessed in Christ, and saved in Christ, they were all redeemed by Christ in time from among men, and are made firstfruits unto God and the Lamb; and all the firstfruits under the law were accounted holy. Christ Himself is the first and the last; the firstborn among many brethren, the first-begotten of the dead, and the firstfruits of them that slept. And as He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, He is not ashamed to call them brethren. He sanctifieth His whole church by His own most precious blood. It is the Triune Jehovah, the Holy One, who condescends to sanctify all His saints by dwelling in them, and they in Him; and it is Divine grace alone that can bring forth in them the fruits of this only true sanctification. They all spring from union to Christ.

We intend, if the Lord permit, leaving here for Brighton next week, as I have engaged to preach at Chichester the first Lord's Day in September. The friends there appear to be very anxious that I should come. May the good Lord be my strength, and bless the message to their souls.

And now, my dear Sir, I commend you all to the Lord and to the word of His grace. My love be with you all in Him.

JOHN HOBBS.

XVII.

Stockwell, September 5, 1857.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all my dear brethren in Christ who assemble at Staining Lane to seek His face.

I was constrained through illness to return home on Thursday, instead of proceeding to Brighton as was intended. How true it is that there are many devices in the heart of man, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. There is nothing that I so much dread as being laid aside as a fruitless branch; but He whose counsels of old are faithfulness and truth, hath promised that they who are ‘planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright.’ ‘And even to your old age, I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.’ But then the branches must be purged, that they may bring forth more fruit. This purging is, first, of the conscience, by the blood of Christ; secondly, of the affections, by the clean water sprinkled, which is an emblem of the Holy Ghost in His renewing operations—these purge from filthiness and idols; and thirdly, He purges the fruit-bearing branches by the reproofs of instruction, by rebukes, crosses, trials, and afflictions. Unbelief, vain thoughts, carnal conversation, fleshly pursuits, and hypocrites in Zion

are among the little foxes which spoil the vines. There is also every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us—these seem to retard and hinder us in running the race that is set before us. *Seem* to hinder us, I say, but almighty grace shall triumph; for God makes all things work together for our good.

Now the things before spoken of must be purged away, scraped off, as it were, burned up and consumed. And when this hath been in a measure performed, they accumulate again and again; hence the need of continual purging.

I hope, the Lord enabling me, to meet you all once more, next Sunday, and to commemorate the love of Jesus, in dying for poor sinners. Unto Him I commend you, and remain yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XVIII.

Stockwell, September 25, 1857.

To my dear friend, Mr. H., and to all my dear friends at Staining Lane who love our Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace be multiplied.—You will perceive that we have not yet left home. On Sunday evening I was taken much worse, but by the Lord's goodness I am now getting better, and the doctor wishes me to go to Brighton on Monday next, if I am equal to it. I do desire both to see and acknowledge the Lord's hand in whatsoever concerneth me.

Now I find that there are two distinct paths in which He is pleased to lead His people. Sometimes, when their goings are perverse before Him,

He will hedge up their way with thorns, that they cannot pass by ; and sometimes He makes the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. Though I have been hindered from my intended journey by continued illness, I do not feel that this is hedging up my way with thorns. I can appeal to Him who trieth the reins and the heart, that my desire is to desire that His will may be done. My heart is not set upon going to Brighton, or anywhere else. I would use such means as He is pleased to appoint, for the restoration of health and strength. If He condescends to grant these a little longer, may He consecrate them to His own sacred use.

I am therefore led to hope that He will make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. He seldom fulfils a promise without first rendering its fulfilment seemingly impossible as to all human appearance. Deliverance comes from Himself when it can be derived from no other source. Such are some of His doings, and they are marvellous in our eyes.

I feel an earnest desire that He will do all His will in me, and through me, and by me, and for me, and that I may be favoured to bless His holy name, and still to say, 'He hath done all things well.' O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together, who still remembereth us in our low estate, because His mercy endureth for ever ! There is nothing we need so much dread as walking contrary to Him. May He keep us all near to Himself, in His fear and favour, faith and love. So prays your affectionate friend and willing servant for Jesus' sake,

JOHN HOBBS.

XIX.

Brighton, October 2, 1857.

My dear Sir,—The love that God hath put into my heart to yourself and to all my dear friends at Staining Lane, constrains me to believe that they will be pleased to know that we arrived here in safety on Wednesday, not being able to leave home before that day. I cannot yet say much about improvement of health. I know that all my times are in His hand, who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

O, my dear friends, beg of Jesus that we may be all living branches, abiding in Him, the true and living Vine! There can be no spiritual life, chaste affections, heavenly-mindedness, longing desires after Zion's feast of fat things, no lively hopes, enduring patience, triumphant faith, cheering prospects of things to come—in a word, there can be no real religion, none of that true confidence which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, without an interest in Jesus, manifested by union to Him, which union alone can produce conformity. All who are made in any measure fruitful in Him, must and shall be purged. We love the fruit, but we shrink from the purging; but our God is able to make all grace abound, so that we may say, Not our will, but His, be done.

I do hope that we shall all be kept cleaving to Him with purpose of heart; for it is well with Zion, yea, and it shall be well. Now, Zion has her converts, the virgins her companions that follow her, her infant progeny—these are the little ones; she hath

her mourners, those that mourn with her and for her, and those that rejoice with her, such as really love her, and seek her welfare. Many of these, though they are one in heart with Zion, yet often fear they are not of Zion ; but every one of them shall be gathered and brought, yea, and shall enter into the King's palace at last ; and she shall be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken. Amen. So says, and so prays your affectionate friend and servant in Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

XX.

Brighton, October 9, 1857.

My dear Sir,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ, assembling together with you in His name at Staining Lane.

I hope I am gaining a little strength, although I experience so many changes, that I am not assured what the Lord's will may be concerning me with respect to the future. But one thing I do know, that it is well, yea, and that it shall be well ; well in sickness, well in health, well in life, and well in death. He hath made an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; this is all my salvation and all my desire.

I find, my dear friends, a wonderful deficiency in myself as to spirituality, spiritual thoughts, spiritual desires, life, love, &c. But I have been thinking, that as it hath pleased the Father that in His dear Son all fulness should dwell, as the eternal God, He is the God of all grace, and all grace is His ; and as Mediator,

all grace is treasured up in Him ; and such is His love that He constrains me to believe that His ever-blessed Majesty and I, a poor sinner, are made one : and that all His communicable grace, through grace, is mine ; and that I have an interest both in Him and it, though I have so little life and so little love as to present experience—at least I think so, because I want so much more. Yet He has a sufficiency of life and love and all other grace in Himself for us both, and for the whole church, gathered, and to be gathered, out of all nations. I have no grace of my own ; but what I want is for the Saviour to put more of His own love into my heart. If I could love Him with all the natural affection in the world, there would be no union in all this, I must love Him with His own love. Little children, seek that you may love Him and one another for His own sake.

I must still hope for an interest in your petitions, as I am not suffered to forget any of you.—Yours affectionately in the Lord, JOHN HOBBS.

XXI.

Brighton, October 15, 1857.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with the little flock assembling at Staining Lane. ‘Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’

Methinks I hear some dear brother or sister saying, Do I belong to that little flock?—Why, if you are a goat, you will never find any real union with the sheep, but you will be ready to butt at them, and to trample them under your feet. But if you belong to

the flock, your bleating, or cry, will be like theirs ; you will love to be with them ; you will know the Shepherd's voice, so as to distinguish it from that of a hireling. And however you may be favoured with the Shepherd's presence, you will yet be frequently exercised with many fears ; therefore He saith, ' Fear not, little flock.' When this *Fear not* is spoken home with Divine power to the heart of the most timid, it never fails to allay their fears for a time. That time may indeed be very short. Fresh fears arise, renewed encouragement is needed ; and what Jesus says in the following words is like a continual flowing promise, ever needed, and ever to be fulfilled : ' I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.'

Now, as the most distressing of all our fears is that which respects, first, the truth and reality of God's work in our souls, and secondly, our being preserved and kept to the end, the Saviour says, ' Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Known to be our Father by the pity and care He exercises towards us ; by faith in Him, love to Him, and reverential fear of Him as such. It is His good pleasure—then He will do what He pleases—to give you the kingdom ; and if He gives it you, neither self nor any other shall ever deprive you of it.

And now I commend you all unto God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build us up and to give us inheritance among them that are sanctified.
—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXII.

Brighton, October 23, 1857.

My dear Sir,—I address you and all the brethren at Staining Lane in the name of the Lord, and that for the last time from this place, as I suppose, wishing you all grace, mercy, and peace.

I have been thinking a little about Him who is the fountain of light, life, and love. Jehovah in His Trinity of Persons is the fountain of living waters, and all beside Him are broken cisterns that can hold no water. Now, if we and our religion endure to the end, we must have the well-spring of wisdom in our hearts. It is only this that can afford the needed supply. Faith may be out of exercise, hope may be removed like a tree, joy may wither, peace may be far off, light may be obscured, love may be cold and languid, and thus spiritual life, motion, and sensation may be at a low ebb, and yet, notwithstanding all this and much more, the well-spring of life within, where it really is, must and shall bubble up, and flow out in renewed affections to, and longing desires after, the Saviour, in fresh acts of faith, hope, and love toward and upon His adorable Person. All this springing up arises from the indwelling of His Spirit in our hearts. ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ;’ and ‘as the Scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive :’ and wheresoever this indwelling of the Spirit is realized, its happy recipient becomes so satisfied,

that he never thirsts again for any other water. He never desires any other religion. He may indeed at times seem to be without any desires at all, yet nothing but this can ever satisfy him. This is that Divine oil that feeds his lamp of profession, and shall sustain its sacred light and heat when the lamp of hypocrites shall be put out.

All those who are favoured to drink of that living water are also blessed with the fear of God in their hearts, as a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. This is the beginning, yea, the sum and substance of all true wisdom. Education, the force of example, natural conscience, and a desire to merit heaven, may move men to do much, and to avoid many things that are wrong; but it is the fear of God in the heart, by which they really depart from evil and cleave to that which is good. In a word, all our springs are in Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit. All our supplies flow from His sovereign goodness, and are received from that fulness which is in Him who filleth all in all.

May you and I, my dear friends, still be kept begging at mercy's door. Such never have been, and never shall be, sent empty away.

Through the Lord's goodness, I have derived benefit from this change, and intend, if it be His will, to return home on Thursday next, and to be with you the following Sunday. May the good Lord favour us all with the spirit of supplication, that we may prevail with His ever-blessed Majesty to be with us, affording all needful supplies of inward grace and outward strength, for without Him we can do nothing.

May He condescend to bless you all.—Yours affectionately in Him,
JOHN HOBBS.

XXIII.

Worthing, August 6, 1858.

My dear Sir,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all those whom I love in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us.

O, my dear friends, how wonderful is our life of faith! Real faith is the gift of God, and it is bestowed only upon those who are convinced that they have no faith of their own, and that they cannot derive it from any natural source, or produce or act it by any human effort. Ours is a secret life, and it is hid with Christ in God. True faith seeth nothing in herself, but she looks to Jesus for her very existence. Faith is often most in exercise when we can neither see nor feel that we have any faith at all. To believe what we do not feel, what we do not see, what we cannot comprehend nor understand, is God's work in our hearts. Those who do not feel their own vileness can easily believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, themselves among the rest; but to feel the evil of sin, and yet to believe that our sins are purged by the precious blood of Christ, to feel that we have no righteousness of our own, and yet to believe that we are righteous even as He is righteous; to feel ourselves as unholy as sin can make us, and yet to believe that we have perfect and complete holiness—first, by the decree of God the Father, who chose

us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; secondly, by the precious blood of Christ, who, that He might sanctify the people, suffered without the gate; purging the conscience from the guilt of sin; and thirdly, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, whose sacred presence sanctifies us wholly, body, soul, and spirit—this is the work of God.

A saving knowledge of this is sufficient, my dear friends, to preserve us in life, through life, and to the end of life: and all those who are blessed with it shall be with Him who hath loved them, and whom their souls love, to all eternity. That the Lord may increase in every one of you these blessed fruits of everlasting love, is the earnest prayer of yours in the kingdom and patience of Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXIV.

Worthing, August 13, 1858.

My dear Sir,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

This will acquaint you that my dear wife is very ill: we think she has taken a severe cold. My Lord saith, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.’ These words contain an unconditional promise. Through the influence of a legal spirit, I find myself continually mixing up my own sinful doings with God’s perfect work; as though, when trouble is sent, prayer is to

be viewed more like a duty than a privilege on my part, and then the deliverance to be expected as a sort of reward. But when these words, 'Call upon me,' &c., were dropped into my heart yesterday, I was led to see that all the troubles experienced in this world are connected with sin, original and actual, as the fruits and effects thereof. 'Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.' And in respect of those who are strangers both to God and themselves, they always flow from God's vindictive wrath against sin. But all such as are brought to hope in His mercy, and who say from their heart, with the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' because they feel their need of His mercy in everything—these, though they go from one fire to another fire, and are not permitted to get at ease in the flesh, are not punished in a vindictive sense, but by the chastening hand of the best of Fathers.

Their trials flow from His everlasting love to them in Christ Jesus. This He lets them know in some of their deepest afflictions, by manifesting His precious love in their hearts: 'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me.'

He, too, is the author of that cry which is spoken of. None ever really cry to God until they are quickened into spiritual life, blessed with a measure of faith in their hearts, and favoured with the Divine operation of the Spirit of supplications. And every deliverance, whether temporal or spiritual, flows from the love, wisdom, and power of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will.

And we glorify Him, when, through grace, we are

enabled to acknowledge that all our afflictions are from Him as a Father, in a way of mercy, love, and favour ; that He puts the cry for deliverance into our hearts, and then answers that cry in such a manner as shall be for His glory and our good ; and that it is He alone who can bestow upon us a tender, loving, and thankful heart.

I believe that it is in this manner, thus briefly and imperfectly expressed, that the promise, ' Call upon me,' &c., is fulfilled by the Lord in the experience of His dear children. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXV.

Worthing, August 20, 1858.

My dear Sir,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all the little flock at Staining Lane.

It is written, that before honour is humility. Our dear Lord and Saviour hath given us an example of this in His own adorable Person ; for although He is the Mighty God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God the Father ; yet, as Man and Mediator, He took on Him the form of a servant, He humbled Himself, He was made perfect through suffering, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. This is unparalleled condescension, flowing from the Saviour's love to poor sinners. ' For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that,

though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.'

Now the great and glorious design of Jehovah from everlasting, concerning the objects of His peculiar love and favour, is, that they shall be conformed to the image of His Son. This conformity to Christ seems to us poor sensible sinners the hardest thing in the world ; but it is God's work, and He is able to perform it. One branch of this our conformity to Christ is true humility, a grace which our nature is altogether destitute of. Some think they possess it, when they talk about it and appear to show it outwardly. But outward displays generally spring from, and foster, inward pride.

We have some sweet instances of genuine humility recorded in the Scriptures. Abraham was so humbled at the Lord's condescension in communing with him, and in enabling him to make so very free with the Almighty, that he was constrained to say, 'O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once.' Ruth the Moabitess, addressing Boaz, who was eminently a type of the Saviour, as a Husband, Master, and Father, said, 'Wherefore is it that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?' Gideon felt himself to be the least in his father's house. When God had made promise to David that he should never want a man to sit upon his throne (which promise is fulfilled in David's Lord and David's Son), he went in and sat before the Lord, and said, 'What am I, and what is my father's house?' Job's afflictions issued in his abhorring himself, and repenting in dust and ashes before the Lord.

And dear Mary Magdalene, when she obtained the forgiveness of all her sins, which were so many, could only wash the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head. Here was such a union between Mary and her Lord, that neither regarded the contempt nor neglect of the self-righteous Simon.

When the Saviour's goodness meets with, and overcomes, all the vileness of a poor, needy, sensible sinner, it really makes him nothing, that the Saviour may be all in all. Birth, parentage, education, attainments, abilities, a good name among men, human wisdom, self-righteousness, and whatsoever can raise a man in his own esteem or in the esteem of others, must now be cast to the moles and to the bats. But this rubbish will continually return, again and again : nor can anything but faith's view of our own interest in that precious blood which cleanses from all sin, ever purge it away.

In this humility lies our true honour ; by this we are brought to the enjoyment and possession of it. Grace bestows it, and grace alone can produce it. That the good Lord will bless, keep, and preserve you all in this narrow path, is the earnest prayer of yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXVI.

Worthing, August 27, 1858.

My dear Sir,—May the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush be with you and yours, and with all the little flock to whom the Saviour hath said, ' Fear not,

for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

On the second Sunday in September I hope, if the Lord has so appointed, once more to meet those whom I love in Him, to tell them more of what He has done for my soul. He hath indeed done wonderful things, whereof I am glad; and my desire is that He will be pleased to pour the Spirit of supplications into your hearts, that you may seek a blessing; for without His presence and power, my coming amongst you can be no benefit to any.

I believe that all those to whom God has been pleased to communicate the blessing of eternal life (which communication stands in His own quickening power) must, when in their right mind, desire above all things personal conformity to the Saviour. One branch of this conformity is true humility. The humble in spirit, being like Jesus, is better than the proud in spirit. A man may be poor—that is, destitute of spiritual things—and yet have his heart filled with pride; witness the state of the Laodicean church, poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Or he may be as poor as Job, as to the things of this world, and yet be as proud as Satan. Not destitution, but a sense of need, a sense of unworthiness, a sense of God's unmerited favour towards oneself, works true humility in the heart. To be able to say in simplicity, 'I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;' that 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,' it is this and the like that works true humility, a humility that is not



discovered by self; for as soon as it is seen or felt to be humility, it is sure to be mixed with pride. The spirit of humility consists in the constant discovery of one's need, attended with some desire, sometimes indeed very feeble, but at other times very intense, after those things that are needed.

Those that have spiritual life need more life, such as have faith desire an increase of faith, those who have a good hope through grace long for the aboundings of hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is made sweet; but to live upon, and with, their Saviour, is a feast indeed. Yet such is the wonderful condescension of our Almighty Saviour, that He receiveth sinners and eateth with them. And sure I am, that a poor, needy sinner, who has been once favoured to know, believe, and taste the love that God hath to us, can never be fully satisfied until he is made perfect by love, and in love; and that not his own, but God's.

Now, to live this true, this secret, this hidden life, even that life which is hid with Christ in God, consists in a constant sight and sense of our need, and in a receiving of that fulness which is in Jesus, and grace for grace—grace to answer all the purposes of grace towards us and in us. Life springs from grace, so does the pardon of sin; justification, righteousness, and sanctification, together with the fear of God in the heart, the obedience of faith, the aboundings of hope, the comfort of love, all joy and peace in believing, patience, submission to the will of God, true humility itself, every foretaste and firstfruit of the glory that shall be revealed in us, all true happiness

here, and every bright and cheering prospect of the eternity that is before us, all flow from the free, sovereign, discriminating mercy, love, grace, and favour of a Triune Jehovah, as our own God in covenant love. That all may be bestowed upon my dear friends, is the earnest prayer of theirs to serve in the gospel of Christ, and for His sake,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXVII.

Worthing, September 3, 1858.

My dear Sir,— It is written, ‘The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way.’ I could never have appropriated this character to myself, under that sense of indwelling sin with which I am constantly more or less exercised; but these words were given to me as a portion from the Lord, to encourage me in this path of tribulation. Besides, all are good whom God condescends to esteem such, and everything is evil (whatever man may think of it) which He declares to be evil. Man cannot alter it.

God’s secret love, His own eternal purpose concerning His family, His covenant of grace, and His good work performed in their hearts; laying the axe to the root of the trees, purging the conscience from dead works, by faith in the precious blood of Christ, clothing poor sinners with a perfect righteousness, and making them holy by the indwelling of His Spirit, even as He is holy, this is making the tree good. The fruit brought forth by such trees, God **Himself** condescends to call good fruit, whether men

like it or not : and His written word is the only rule of right and wrong which I can ever acknowledge.

Now the steps of such a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he often does not know where to go, what to do, or how to act. But one thing we know—that if we are led to Jesus, we are sure of being right. We walk by faith, not by sight. In haste, yours affectionately,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXVIII.

Brighton, September 10, 1858.

To the Congregation assembling at Staining Lane Chapel, whom I love in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—I had intended to be with you on Lord's Day, as I said, but my ever-gracious Lord and Master has ordered it otherwise. On Wednesday evening I experienced a return of my old complaint, and I am now very weak and low from the effects, and quite unable for any fatigue. I do earnestly long for the privilege of again proclaiming amongst you that which was from the beginning, which I have seen, which I have looked upon, and my hands have handled, of the Word of life ; earnestly desirous, on the one hand, to be the unworthy instrument of imparting to you some spiritual benefit, and, on the other hand, anxious to be kept from the most remote idea that my poor labours can be necessary to the church of God, any further than my kind Master is pleased to make use of them.

We are called to live in an evil day ; iniquity aboundeth, and the love of many waxeth cold. Not that I can cast stones at any—but I do often mourn over

the present low and destitute state of Zion. Many a fruitful field has become a wilderness ; but the Lord hath promised that the wilderness shall be made a fruitful field ; and He who hath promised is both able and faithful to perform it.

I find in Scripture, and experience confirms it, that there are two kinds of barren ground. First, that which never bears anything but briars and thorns, which is nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned. This is represented by the way-side, in our Lord's parable. And secondly, that barrenness which is discovered within, by a feeling sight and sense, not of entire destitution, but of deficiency—not that there is no spiritual life, but that the measure thereof is so very small. Those who have a sense of their own barrenness do really bear fruit, though they cannot discover it. Such are dissatisfied with self and with everything beneath the sun, knowing by experience that all is vanity. But they are satisfied with the Saviour, whensoever He condescends to smile upon them. They are satisfied with His precious blood, with His perfect righteousness, with the fulness of His grace, yea, they are more than satisfied with His adorable Person. Communion and fellowship with Him, faith's view of Him, a word from Him, His endearing smile and His soul-satisfying approbation, His presence, His ever-blessed Self, is light in darkness, health in sickness, strength in weakness, joy in sorrow, and life in all the several branches of death. To know this experimentally, to be blessed with such a religion, is to know Him, whom to know aright is eternal life.

I do long to meet you all again, when the Lord is pleased to enable me. To ask for an interest in your prayers is unnecessary, as I well know that the holy and ever-blessed Spirit operates freely in the hearts of His people, and without His heavenly influence there can be no real prayer. And thus I conclude by referring you to the blessing pronounced upon the children of Israel, Numbers vi. 24-26. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXIX.

Brighton, September 17, 1858.

My dear Sir,—I greet you in the Lord, and not you only, but all those also whom I love with you in the Lord at Staining Lane. Grace be with you, mercy and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

I do know that both my worthless self and all that concerns me, together with the whole church of God, are in the safe keeping of Him who is too wise to err, and too faithful to be unkind. It is this faithfulness of the Almighty which is my only stay and support. I know that I cannot find any faithfulness in myself :

‘How I wander, waver, reel!
Only wise by fits and starts.’

God’s faithfulness stands, first, in the independence of His being, and in His immutability: ‘I am Jehovah, I change not.’ As He is Himself without variable-ness, or the shadow of turning, so are His everlasting

love to, and His eternal choice of, His people in Christ alike immutable: 'Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.' He is faithful in His justice. This is seen in the eternal punishment of those whom He hath in just judgment rejected: 'Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.'

The three glorious Persons in the adorable Trinity are faithful in the covenant of grace. All that the Father giveth to His dear Son He draweth to Him. Christ laid down His life for these His sheep, and the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in their hearts. God is faithful to that work of grace which He begins in them, however small that work may seem to be: 'Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son.'

Hath He quickened thy soul into life? Then Christ is thy life, and He will impart all that is needful to sustain that life within thee; He will revive thy hope, strengthen and increase thy faith, draw out thy love to Him, by discovering His love to thee, He will extend peace to thy soul like a river, pour His oil of gladness into thy sorrowful heart, and restore thee to the enjoyment of His favour, when thou seemest to be cast out of His sight. He is faithful to His promises; they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus.

Yes, say you, but have I an interest in them?—This is discovered, first, by His having done for you, and in you, that which is peculiar to His own family.

Has He brought you to feel that you are nothing but sin, that you can do nothing to merit His favour, and that you have nothing to pay? Secondly, does He continue to drop His word of promise and of comfort into a heart which needs it, and is prepared by Himself to receive it? This shows your interest in the promise; and he that is interested in one promise is interested in all, for Christ is not divided.

Now, I do find that whatsoever fear, temptation, or trouble, a kind and gracious Father is pleased to exercise me with, when He condescends to lead me by humble faith to repose upon His faithfulness, all is well. Hath He forgiven all trespasses? He will continue to manifest His pardoning mercy. Hath He hitherto supplied my every need? He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, nor will He forsake His own work. Amen.

JOHN HOBBS.

XXX.

Brighton, September 24, 1858.

My dear Sir,—I once more address you, with all whom I love at Staining Lane, in the name of the Lord, earnestly desiring that your souls may be kept alive in the fear of His holy name, in the experience of His unchangeable love, and in the exercise of that true and living faith which comes from Himself, which honours Him, and which He will ever own and honour. Amen.

I was enabled to preach at Church Street last evening, and was favoured with the Master's presence in speaking. His service is perfect freedom, and I do love to proclaim His goodness to poor sinners. The

spirit indeed is willing, but the poor tabernacle fails. I feel quite exhausted this morning by the exercise. I am still waiting to know what the Lord's will may be concerning me. There is nothing I so much dread as the working of unbelief and of a rebellious spirit. It is

‘Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His.’

My present intention is, if the Lord will, to come to London on Saturday, the 2nd October, and to meet those whom I do dearly love in the Lord on Sunday, the 3rd. I want again to commemorate with them the unparalleled love of Jesus, in laying down His life for us poor sinners. O that He may be known amongst us in breaking of bread! Such is my desire, if He will condescend to strengthen me for His own work, you helping together with me in your prayers for me.

God must put every real cry to Himself into the heart of a poor sinner, before it can be uttered; and there is no real crying to Him without a measure of faith in Him, which faith He bestows only upon the objects of His eternal choice. Without faith we can neither please Him, go to Him, have communion with Him, nor receive anything from Him; and, what is most extraordinary, this faith is frequently the most active when it is least perceived by us. The sin of unbelief affects our senses, but faith is above sense, and generally contrary to it. It endures all kinds of afflictions, trials, and exercises, as seeing Him who is invisible. Sense always puts the worst construction upon God's

dealings; it contradicts Him, and seeks to make Him a liar. Faith believes that all things work together for good. Unbelief draws its arguments against us, from our continual sense of deadness, coldness, barrenness, and all that evil which works within us. Faith rises above these, and looks to Jesus, and finds in Him grace sufficient and strength sufficient for every time of need.

Now, I believe that we shall never be freed from the presence of unbelief whilst we are in this tabernacle, nor shall faith ever be taken away from us. When self is most active, the voice of unbelief is clamorous; but Jesus Himself is the very life of faith, and by His sacred power makes her triumph. We speak, think, act, and feel, according as these two principles work within us—such a mixture of faith and unbelief, perfectly distinct in themselves, but continually working in us; but Jesus has triumphed, and His triumph is ours.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXI.

Brighton, October 1, 1858.

To my dear Friend, and to all others whom Jesus loves, and whom I love for His sake, assembling at Staining Lane: Grace, mercy, and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful and true Witness, and the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and

hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In my last letter I expressed my desire and intention of coming to you next Lord's Day, but He hath said, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' and so I find it. My weakness of body continues, and I feel myself entirely unable to sustain any fatigue at present; and after seeking to the Lord, and begging to know His will, in which I humbly desire that grace may be given me to acquiesce, I have been brought to the following conclusion—to remain waiting here this month, as October, in all human probability, is most likely to be the means of strengthening my frame. I shall then, if God permit, and I am spared, return home finally, so as to be with you on Sunday, the 31st. This will be making a full trial whether it may please the Lord to bless the change. I am deeply sensible that the efficacy of all human means must entirely depend upon the sovereign will of Him who is the good Physician, and who hath said, 'I am the Lord that healeth thee.'

But enough about my worthless self; Jesus is our All in all. O that my dear friends may be favoured to know Him more, look to Him more, depend upon Him more, trust in Him more, and love Him more! This can be produced only by the discovery of His love to us poor sinners. We love Him because He first loved us. It is sweet to believe the general testimony of His Word concerning His love to His whole church, but sweeter



still when that precious love is brought home to our own hearts. He condescends to reveal and make it known in me by a variety of sweet methods : not only by the testimony of His Word discovered to faith, but by His tender sympathy. 'In all their affliction He was afflicted.' This was observed by the carnal Jews when He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and they said, 'Behold how He loved him!'

This precious love is manifested by His endearing smile, by His approbation, by His drawing our poor backsliding hearts to Himself, by His bringing our thoughts into captivity to His own obedience, by enabling us to find secret delight, pleasure, and satisfaction in Him, and by assuring us by His own almighty and peculiar power that He delights in, and really loves us, notwithstanding all fears, all reasonings, and all appearances to the contrary. It is Jesus alone who can, does, and will perform all this and much more than I can tell you of, in the behalf of all His tried, exercised, tempted, but beloved family.

Now unto Him that is able to do in us, and for us, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the working of His mighty power, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.
—Ever yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXII.

Brighton, October 8, 1858.

To my dear Friend, Mr. H., and to all the faithful brethren in Christ at Staining Lane : Grace

to you and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—My motive in thus addressing you from time to time is a humble hope that it may please Him, whose I am, and whom I desire to serve with my body, soul, and spirit in the gospel of His Son, to impart to you some spiritual benefit through my unworthy instrumentality. And, first, all our spiritual profit must flow from the free, sovereign mercy, grace, and favour of a Triune Jehovah. Secondly, both he that sows and they that reap are encouraged, and, blessed be God! are enabled at times, to be earnest, fervent, and diligent, at a throne of grace. ‘I will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.’

A keen appetite, and a deep sight and sense of our need, springing from life, are God’s own preparation in the soul for our receiving spiritual profit. What is communicated, either by the public ministry of the word, by communion one with another, or by writing, must be in strict accordance with the written word; it must in everything agree with, and flow from, the inward teaching and anointing of the Holy Ghost; for whatsoever is not supplied from this pure fountain of light, life, and love, though it may sometimes please the flesh, amuse the mind, and gratify the senses, can never be truly profitable to the souls of God’s quickened family.. ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’

Now, those things which I find to be needful, sweet, and profitable to myself, must be such



to you, my beloved, also. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so may we be enabled to walk in Him. This walking is believing in Him, abiding in Him, following Him, looking to Him, calling upon Him, embracing Him, receiving Him, and retaining Him in our hearts, affections, thoughts, and desires. It is thus that we abide in Him, and He in us.

We received Him at first as God's unspeakable gift to us. May we be continually asking for further discoveries of our possession of, and interest in, this most precious of all gifts. We received Him as Jesus, a Saviour, by an application of His blood to purge our conscience from the guilt of sin, and our affections from the love of it. 'How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?' But because sin will still abide in us, we need a continual receiving, a fresh cleansing, fresh purging, renewed discoveries of the Saviour's efficacy, and further actings of faith upon Him. It is God's protecting care over us, and His fear implanted in our hearts that keeps us from evil; but the precious blood of Christ purges our conscience from dead works to serve the living God; His righteousness freely imputed, freely revealed to faith, and freely received, justifies from all things from which we could never be justified by the law of Moses. This is my only ground of acceptance with God; and this my only plea, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' To be preserved from sin, to have sin subdued, and the love of it cast out, are the fruits and effects of God's pardoning

mercy, but in no sense either the procuring or the meritorious cause of our acceptance with God.

May you, my beloved friends, be favoured with an increased experience of these realities. Many know them in theory; but blessed is every one who hath thus received Christ Jesus the Lord; for all such shall walk in Him, abide in Him, live in Him, and be with Him where He is, to all eternity; and this will complete conformity to Him. May every one of us be enabled through grace to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Amen, saith your affectionate servant in Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXIII.

Brighton, October 15, 1858.

To my dear Friend, Mr. H., and to all those whom I love in the Lord at Staining Lane, to them that call upon God out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned; 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace unto you and peace be multiplied.' Amen.

All who have been favoured to taste that the Lord is gracious, must have a continued desire, more or less, for an increase, for a multiplying of grace, not only toward them, but in them. Grace includes the everlasting, free, sovereign, discriminating, and immutable love and favour of a Triune Jehovah to all the objects of His eternal choice, His delight in them, His approbation of

them in Christ Jesus, as also His secret thoughts concerning them, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give them an expected end. But all this grace flows from Jehovah; it is treasured up in Christ; it lies hid in His secret purpose; and it is secured, and made sure to all who are interested in it, by an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and which can never be broken. But grace, that it may be grace indeed, must be openly displayed; and so it is, in the unspeakable gift of Christ to poor needy sinners. Now, one of the most distinguished acts of grace is its application to each unworthy recipient of it. You and I could never have had any saving knowledge of Divine grace, had it not pleased the God of all grace to reveal it in our hearts by the Spirit of grace.

The first saving act of God's grace in us, stands in our being quickened into life from a death in trespasses and sins, and this springs from God's everlasting love to us in Christ Jesus. 'God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved.' God's secret care and His watchful eye are indeed over the objects of His choice, while they are sunk in the ruins of the fall. They are preserved in Jesus Christ. There may be, and there often is, much inward working. They are not suffered to remain at ease in the flesh; they are unsettled in their minds, law and conscience accuse and condemn; but they have no desires after Christ, after union to Him, and an interest in Him, until they

are quickened into life. This then, I say, is the first manifest act of Divine grace in a poor sinner's experience, proving it to be grace indeed; and in whomsoever this grace is thus truly wrought, there is, there must be, a desire after more grace.

Grace is multiplied when God opens the door of faith, by which the promise enters into the heart; the ear of faith hears the Saviour's voice, and the eye of faith perceives Him; which perception attracts the heart to Him in its desires after Him, in its thoughts concerning Him, and in its longings to be cleansed from sin by a manifestation of His atonement to faith. Such long to know that their sins are forgiven for His name's sake; they earnestly desire to lay hold upon Him, by the hand of faith, as their salvation, and to go to Him, by the foot of faith, with all their wants, troubles, fears, and desires. This is the multiplying of Divine grace in them. Yea, every secret motion of the heart, every secret cry, every wish, all that hungering and thirsting, watching and waiting, longing and seeking for an interest in Christ; the desire to know Him, to trust Him, to love Him, to be conformed to Him, to follow Him, and to be with Him—all this flows from Himself, from that inexhaustible fulness of Divine grace which is treasured up in Him, and of which Himself is the glorious fountain, the All and in all.

And you and I, my dear friends, do need, shall need, that this grace may be multiplied in our experience more and more, until it is fully consummated in eternal glory. That every covenant

blessing, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, may be richly imparted to you according to His wisdom, love and power, is, my dear friends, the constant prayer of yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXIV.

Brighton, October 22, 1858.

To my dear Friend, Mr. H., and to all the faithful brethren in Christ which are at Staining Lane : Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.—I trust in the Lord that my face will be set toward the Mount Gilead next week, and that I shall be again favoured to assemble with those whom I love in the Spirit, in our little hill of Zion, on Sunday the 31st.

My mind has been occupied of late about four things, which I deeply feel my need of, and which I earnestly desire that my gracious and condescending Lord and Saviour will be pleased to favour me with.

First, I want an increase of that true and living faith, which I dare not say I am altogether destitute of, but which sometimes is so small and weak that I can scarcely discover it. Yet I know that the weak are to say, I am strong. Faith's victory over self, sin, Satan, the world, death, hell, and the grave, is obtained in weakness ; for, ' When I am weak, then am I strong.' Now I want such an increase of this faith to be wrought in my heart by the Spirit of God, that I may be enabled to be continually looking to, depending upon, and trusting in, my Almighty Saviour, so as to have no concern about myself, or for

myself, but that I may be found in Him, and of Him in peace.

Secondly, I want an increase of the fear of His holy name in my heart, that I may not depart from Him, but that I may loathe self, and abhor sin in all its secret and mysterious workings, and in all that is more open and manifest ; that I may reverence and tremble at His holy Word ; that I may see His hand in all that concerns me, and that I may acknowledge Him in all my ways, and believe in my heart that, whether I can perceive it or not, He condescends to do all things for me, all that shall be for His own glory and for my real good.

Thirdly, I want to submit to His sovereign will and disposal in all things. I want this, I say, for although I am favoured sometimes with a measure of this submission, yet I still find that without Him I can neither will nor do any good thing.

Fourthly, I want that which crowns all, gives all, works and produces all, and from which all flows, namely, the free, sovereign, discriminating, everlasting and unchangeable love of a Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, to be so shed abroad in my heart as to produce the following effects :—to deliver me from all slavish, servile fear ; for where fear is there is torment ; but there is no fear in love, for perfect love casteth out fear. Could we know and believe more of that love which God hath to us (for God is love), we should certainly love Him more. Some persons seem to think that a faith of interest in His love must arise from our love to Him ; but John says, ‘ We love Him because He first loved us ;’ and, ‘ We

have known and believed the love that God hath to us.' Now this knowledge of His love is derived from believing His love; and faith to believe is God's gift, wrought in the hearts of poor sinners who have a secret interest in this precious love, and which interest is manifested to them by their being enabled to believe the love that God hath to them. 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.' And Paul saith, 'Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'

Now I know that the full fruition or perfection of this in us, cannot be attained unto whilst we are in the body; yet I desire to forget that which is behind, and to reach forth to that which is before, that I may press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And I also desire that every one of you, my dear friends, do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that you may be followers of God, as dear children.

That the blessing of the Almighty may rest upon, and attend each of you, is the earnest prayer of yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXV.

Thames Ditton, July 29, 1859.

My dear Sir,—It is the sovereign will of Him who is my All in all to lay me aside like a fruitless branch, as it respects the ministry of the word. I have loved the habitation of His house, and the place where His honour dwelleth; I have not sat with vain persons, nor with hypocritical mockers in feasts.

I have endeavoured to shun the company of the ungodly ; in my eyes a vile person has been contemned, let him be who he might : but I have desired to honour those that fear the Lord. I have found, and do still find, that my heart cleaves to them who are the excellent of the earth. And who are they ? All such as have the mind of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the image of Christ ; all those who fear the Lord and hate evil, whether in themselves especially, or in others.

I shall again be absent from those whom I love in the Lord next Sunday. My petition is, ' Teach me to do Thy will.' Whether it may be to return home, or to remain here a little longer, my hope and desire is that I may break bread amongst you on the 7th of August.

Now may the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that we have suffered awhile (and He best knows how long), make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXVI.

August 20, 1859.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you and yours.

As we know not what a day may bring forth, I have waited until now before saying that I do not feel equal to labouring in the Lord's vineyard at present. Through the Lord's great goodness I have

been somewhat better the last few days, but have very little strength ; yet I do hope that, if it be His will, I shall be enabled to come among His family on the following Sabbath, the 28th.

God hath made me willing in the day of His power. I am by nature and experience the greatest rebel in the world ; but He has constrained me by His love and goodness to seek salvation through the precious blood and all-sufficient righteousness of His dear Son. And I do bless Him that I have not sought Him in vain : yet I still find that both to will and to perform that which is good, is not in me, but is from Himself alone. -

He hath often condescended to bow my stubborn will to that which pleases Him ; and though flesh and heart fail, He is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Thus you perceive I have not this strength in myself ; He makes it perfect in my weakness, and so keeps me dependent on Him. He made me willing to go into the vineyard at first, and my heart is still with my dear friends at Staining Lane. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—
Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXVII.

Brighton, September 16, 1859.

To the little flock assembling at Staining Lane, their willing servant and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, wishes all health, peace, and prosperity of soul, with as much ease and comfort of body as shall be for God's glory and their good.

The Saviour in His intercessory prayer saith, 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me : for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' In these words Jesus expresses the sweet and tender love of His heart towards all those whom the Father had given Him in covenant, and who are the objects of His eternal choice.

Now, when the time to favour Zion is come, these are all quickened, one by one, into spiritual life : and this life is the work of the Triune Jehovah : 'For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.' And, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth.' Life springs from union to Christ, and is the certain evidence of it ; for there can be no life where there is no union to Christ, any more than there was in Ezekiel's dry bones before the spirit of life entered into them. 'They that are joined to the Lord are one spirit.' There can be no living to God in a state of separation from Christ ; nay, this life is *Christ in us* : 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith'—so that there is no living in faith, nor dying in faith, without Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life ; the resurrection and the life ; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory ; appear with Him, in Him, and to Him, appear to God the Father in that perfection to which He hath chosen us.

Now it may be that my dear friends, like myself,

though enabled to say, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, for Thy word hath quickened me,' yet desire to be more acquainted with this life, to have further discoveries of the well-spring of life in their own hearts. Well then, its effect is to produce a secret cleaving to the Person of Christ. He wills that we should be with Him; and every quickened soul desires to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. He puts His own life into our hearts: and this brings us to esteem and value Him; we want to follow Him—'Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?' Like the Gadarene, we want to be with Him, to enjoy His sweet communion by believing in Him, by hoping in Him, by feeling that His love constrains us to love Him. We want to be with Him, and for Him to be with us, in His Word and ordinances, and in His providential dealings with us, whether they be prosperous or adverse; to be with us in the fire and in the water, in the valley and on the mount. And He hath promised, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'

Now, though faith may believe His word, and that in the darkest seasons, yet love craves His smile. We long for His endearing presence in life and in death.

All this springs from life in the soul, nor will it ever be found where there is no life. Christ will have a desire to the work of His hands; and we desire to be with Him. This desire, both in Him and in us, manifests the same love, for there is but one love between us. And thus shall the Saviour's intercession prevail, 'That they may be with me where I am.' He condescends to come to us wheresoever we are,

and He will soon take us to Himself, that we may be with Him, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. I am sure my friends cannot desire more than this, for more there cannot be.

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXVIII.

Brighton, September 23, 1859.

My dear Sir,—May abundance of grace from the fulness that is in Jesus flow into your heart, and not yours only, but also into the hearts of all them that love Him for what He has done for them.

The Lord tells us that He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Now, I have been meditating concerning the use, end, and design of afflictions. It is clear they do not spring out of the ground ; no, they come from God, and are of His appointing ; and, like all His operations, they are for the manifestation of His own glory ; as He said of Paul, ‘I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.’

‘No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.’ I find, then, that a purging furnace, composed, as it often is, of a great variety of circumstances, produces the following effects in my experience. First, the fiery trial leads to a further discovery of the evil of sin, as it is an abiding principle within ; hitherto-unperceived evil comes to light, and is *felt*, at least as to the greater depths thereof ; such as rebellion (Jonah said, ‘I do well to be angry, even unto death’), murmuring, pride, hard thoughts of God, and especially unbelief. Sinful self also, together with a host of other evils, and Satan at

their head, seem ready at times to carry everything before them, and to swallow us up, especially when the Saviour withholds the light of His countenance. We cry and shout, and He shutteth out our prayer, and that until we feel that we have neither power nor will to shout any more. At such seasons nothing is seen but this *dross* ; it bubbles up and is uppermost.

But, blessed be God ! there is something else at the bottom—there is life—this is known by feeling. There is love to God : and neither Satan nor unbelief can remove it from the heart. God Himself has put it there, and there it shall abide ; hence those secret longings, thirstings, and pantings for the Saviour's presence, which are sometimes experienced. There is hope ; hence, though it may be cut down like a plant, or removed like a tree, yet it is anchored within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, and it will surely revive and spring up again. God's faithfulness performs this. And there is faith at the bottom. So it was with Asaph, when his sore ran in the night and ceased not, and his soul refused to be comforted : he even said, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will He be favourable no more ? Is His mercy clean gone for ever ? Doth His promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies ?' No, He hath not : for the Psalmist adds, 'This is my infirmity'—my unbelief—'but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.'

Fiery trials bring to light the dross and tin ; but the spirit of burning (which implies God's secret

love) consumes and burns them up ; whilst the precious blood of sprinkling, received by faith, purges the conscience from guilt, and Christ is revealed in the heart as an Almighty Saviour. Now the blessing of peace flows in like a river ; and the poor tried, tempted, exercised soul rejoices in hope of the eternal glory of God.

I believe, my dear friends, that this work of discovering and purging must be continued, until mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

But some of you may be ready to say, I am plagued every morning, and chastened all the day. Now, I see that the world also has its troubles, how then can I know whether mine is the spot of God's children ?—The trouble of the world is usually produced by outward circumstances.—And so, say you, is mine.—Yet the bitterest ingredient in your cup of suffering arises from that dross within, of which we have spoken. Relieve the world of their outward trials, and they will be happy ; but if you are a child of God, you can never be satisfied without a hope in His mercy.—O, say you, I seem to forget all about it at times, and to be more careless and unconcerned than any !—This may be your state ; but you are not suffered to remain in it, nor to be satisfied with it. And why not ? Because God has implanted the principles of life, love, hope, and faith ; and He who hath thus begun in you His own good work, will never leave nor forsake you. I know He never will. Hypocrites do not cry when He binds them, but the children cry day and night.—My love be with you **all in Christ Jesus.**

JOHN HOBBS.

XXXIX.

Brighton, September 30, 1859.

To my dear Friend, Mr. H., and to all others whom the Master loves, and who love me for His sake at Staining Lane, grace and peace be multiplied.

In my last letter I mentioned a few things connected with the trials and afflictions of the Lord's people, as they have been discovered in my own experience. As far as my memory serves me, I noticed the use that God makes of a purging furnace, to bring to light the dross and tin of our poor fallen nature. But this is not all. It is written, 'It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' The Saviour Himself is both our way and our forerunner. Now, it is chiefly by afflictions that we are made conformable unto Him in this world. 'That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.' A daily cross, a purging furnace, a chastening rod, and the path of tribulation, must and shall attend us all our days; but 'he that endureth to the end shall be saved.'

'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' God hath been pleased to convince us of the sin of unbelief; then think it not strange that it should continue to work in us, that Satan tempts, and that fears often abound that we shall not endure unto the end.

Ah ! say some, if I could be assured that the work which I sometimes hope, yea, even believe, to be begun in me, is God's work, I think I could trust His faithfulness to carry it on unto the end ; but I often fear lest I should have been deceived.

Now, my beloved, you and I know that the written word, the preached word, and conscience give the lie to these fears. 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us : ' and 'I am persuaded, that neither these things nor any other shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Another end for which God hath appointed all our afflictions in number, weight, and measure is, that He may make known the riches of His glory, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. It is not only our being first brought into such a state as to feel that we need an almighty and an all-sufficient Saviour ; but it is the continual, daily discovery thereof, that so endears Him to us. Where there is spiritual life, there will be more or less of an abiding sense of our need of this never-failing Friend. Fresh circumstances are ever arising in the saints' path of tribulation, to bring them to feel their need of Jesus, as a Saviour, Counsellor, Guide, Refuge, Shepherd, Husband, Brother ; as strength, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Yes, He brings us to feel our need of Him in all the glorious fulness of His adorable person, characters, and relations ; and here indeed He gives us to prove His truth and faithfulness : 'I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee

of. He does exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

Now, I am persuaded that we never could know experimentally these blessed realities, did not our path to the kingdom above lie through much tribulation; in short, it is the suitableness of Christ to all the wants and necessities, both temporal and spiritual, of a poor needy sinner, the timely aid that He affords, the watchful care that He displays, and the seasonable manifestations of Himself in His wisdom, love, and power, that exalt Him in our esteem infinitely above all others in heaven or in earth.

The whole Word of God, together with the experience of His family in all ages, proclaims that if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with children. It is the family feature. It pleased Him to put His only-begotten Son, His dear Son, the Son of His love, to grief; and all His adopted sons must and shall suffer with Him. There are blessed seasons, when we can, and do, glory in tribulations, in infirmities, in afflictions, in weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon us, and be displayed in us: 'For when I am weak, then am I strong'—strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, strong in faith, giving glory to God, out of weakness made strong. Therefore, let the weak say, I am strong.

Brethren, if we were strangers to the weakness, what could we know about the strength? if strangers to our own emptiness, what could we know of His fulness? and if we were not helpless sinners,

what could we know of Jesus as an Almighty Saviour?

These things will suit some of you, if it should please the Almighty to accompany them with His own power to your souls. Without this, mere words can do no good: for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. And now, brethren beloved, I commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XL.

Brighton, October 7, 1859.

My dear Sir,—I greet you in the Lord; and not you only, but all those also who love our Lord Jesus Christ, because He hath first loved them, and hath washed them from their sins in His own blood, and hath made them kings and priests unto God and His Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

My earnest desire in sending you these scraps from time to time, is, that some spiritual benefit may be thereby communicated and received, and that the Saviour may be glorified.

Paul tells us that, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth to those which were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But this pressing and reaching forth can be experienced only as we remember how we have received and heard. Therefore, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the

Lord, so walk ye in Him.' 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee in the wilderness.' From these scriptures, as also from the whole Word of God, and from the anointing, or teaching, which we have received of Him, it is clear that present experience of Divine things, and all future discoveries and manifestations, must be in harmony with the first work, or they should be rejected. For, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you' and ye have received, 'let him be accursed.'

I believe there never was a day in which the following exhortation of the Saviour was more needed: 'Remember therefore how thou hast received.' *Thou*—an individual—showing the personality of real religion. *Remember*—so as to compare all future receptions with the past. *Remember how thou hast received*, and what thou hast received. And what was the first thing savingly received? I answer, The blessing of eternal life, as the free gift of God, in thy soul, and that by the sovereign operation of Father, Son, and Spirit. The sinner who is thus quickened, is as passive as the clay in the hand of the potter.

Now, whatever tends to the increase of this secret, hidden life of God in the soul, must always agree with the first work, and is known to be of God by this agreement. It might be shown that every future good and perfect gift, which cometh down from the Father of lights, is bestowed in the same free, sovereign, and undeserved manner; and may we

believe, hope, and expect, to receive all that God hath promised, and all that we can need, according to this blessed rule of His own working. Thus may we remember how we have received and heard.

We were by nature not only dead in sin, but deaf to God's counsel and reproof : nor should we ever have attended to the Shepherd's voice, if He had not condescended to open our ears to discipline. 'The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped ;' 'The ears of them that hear shall hearken ;' 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear.' When the ear is thus circumcised, the joyful sound enters, and finds access to the heart by the door of faith, or, through believing ; and God alone can open this door, and keep it open. These are the blessed people that do know the joyful sound ; and whatever you may hear in future to the profit of your souls must be thus heard. 'Remember, therefore, how thou hast heard.'

The blood of atonement was put upon the tip of the right ear of the Jewish high priest ; to show that all must be washed in the precious blood of Christ, and that the ear of faith can receive nothing and none but Christ. Then the anointing oil was put upon the blood ; to show that the Spirit of faith testifies of none but Christ to faith. Thus, my dear friends, you heard at first, if you ever heard savingly, and so you must continue to hear unto the end ; whether it be by reading the Scriptures, by the inward teaching of God in your own hearts, or by the public ministry of the Word ; and whatsoever does not agree with this will be found unprofitable ; nay, worse, it will lead ~~—~~ astray in a way not cast up.

But I must conclude. I go to Chichester, if the Lord will, to-morrow. And you, brethren beloved, pray for me, that wisdom may be given rightly to divide the word of truth, and strength to deliver the message; that God may be glorified, and His own family benefited.

And now, may the good Lord bless, keep, and preserve you in the fear of His holy name. So prays yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLI.

Brighton, October 21, 1859.

My dear Sir,—The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. The Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Amen.

I thank my friend for his kind letter. The remark in mine was not intended as a reproof. You must know, that whilst I desire to cease from man, yea, from mine own self, as to any trust in an arm of flesh, yet those of the Lord's people among whom He has favoured me to be the unworthy dispenser of the word of life, are very dear to me. I cannot forget the many sweet opportunities I have been indulged with. I have often come among you with some heavy burden pressing me down, and whilst speaking of Him whose mercy endureth for ever, He has put off my sackcloth and girded me with strength; and I have gone away with a heart full of gratitude,

love, and praise to Him who hath done such great things for me. I felt the other day like a weaned child, even as a child that is weaned of its mother, broken and melted in spirit, my heart drawn out to the Lord and His people—it was this that produced the remark in my letter; I thought that I should like to hear from you.

There is one thing more that has just been brought upon my mind, in connection with the subject of my last letter. ‘If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.’ This is very solemn and important, addressed as it is by the Saviour to the angels, or ministers, of the churches; and I feel in this a confirming proof that all real religion first of all concerns one’s own self.

‘Be watchful.’—This arises from God’s watchful care over us, for ‘except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.’ It is through knowing, believing, and feeling that the Lord’s eye is upon us for good, and His ear open to our cry, that we are brought to take heed to ourselves, and to the doctrine we either preach or hear; that it is neither more nor less than is contained in the written Word; that it is in accordance with the unction we have received from the Holy One; and that it agrees with the experience wrought by Him in our own hearts: and whatsoever testimony does not agree with these things should be rejected.

But, alas! how often it seems impossible that we should watch, through the weakness of the flesh,

drowsiness, deadness, coldness, barrenness, and a total destitution (at least so it sometimes seems to us) of all that is good, together with the presence of everything that is evil; as unbelief, carnality, worldly-mindedness, and the activity and prevalence of sinful self, in that indescribable variety of forms in which it works. Thus surrounded and compassed about with evil both within and without, how can we watch? The answer has just dropped into my heart. The Saviour says, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Lord, this is enough; this grace is exercised in Thy watchful care over us.—This enables us to watch unto prayer, to watch the effects of the Lord's various dealings and dispensations with ourselves, to wait for Him more than they that watch for the morning. Now, all those whom He condescends to watch over for good, shall be thus brought and enabled to watch for Him.

'If therefore thou shalt not watch:—It is the flowing of His grace that supplies all these effects in us; when we think ourselves the most deficient, grace is generally the most abundant; and often when we think ourselves to be richly furnished, we find to our cost that we are the most destitute.

True faith sees grace in its glorious fountain, flowing in the rich streams of Divine mercy and favour to our poor needy souls. She discovers the true and living Vine which produces every good fruit, but she will have nothing to do with self; she knows and acknowledges her Divine Author

and Finisher, but never claims any merit of her own. The Lord applauds the fruit, but true faith ascribes all the praise and glory to Him. She sees none but Jesus. And thus the Lord condescends to produce in us the watchfulness intended, and every other fruit that pleases Him. He sees in His own work much that we can never discern, and it is best for us when we see only Him.

Last evening I preached at the Hall for Mr. E. Vinall. The place was full, and I believe the Lord was with us. Text, Heb. xiii. 8.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLII.

Brighton, October 28, 1859.

My dear Sir,—I once more greet you in the Lord, and not you only, but all those also whose hearts the Lord hath circumcised to love Him, and to love His unworthy servant for His sake ; wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Through the good hand of my God upon me, I have been strengthened and enabled to fulfil all my engagements in the country, closing on Wednesday evening at the Pavilion Chapel. There was a large congregation, who appeared to hear attentively.

Subject, 1 Tim. i. 15. I do trust that the word was blessed.

And now I am waiting, if it be the Lord's will, to meet you all once more in the flesh at Staining Lane, on Sunday week, Nov. 6, and my earnest desire and hope is, that I may be brought amongst you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. That which concerns my dear friends is, first, that they may be favoured with the abundance of life in their own souls, producing an earnest desire, a keen appetite, for Zion's provision; and, secondly, that they may be blessed with the Spirit of grace and supplications, so that they may pour out their hearts to God for me, that I may be furnished and strengthened for the work.

The gospel of Christ is good news from a far country, even from heaven; proclaiming pardon, peace, and reconciliation with God, to poor, lost, ruined, undone sinners, who feel that sin is their heaviest burden. And this is not merely a proclamation made to the senses; but it is such a display of Divine power as quickens a sinner into life; from which life springs every longing desire of the soul after Christ and an interest in His great salvation. This power bows the stubborn will, removes natural prejudice, communicates light to the understanding, breaks and melts the obdurate heart, and produces that faith which worketh by love, is moved by the filial fear of God, and stands in His own almighty power.

Faith embraces Christ as its only object, author, and finisher; it credits the promises of God in Him;

it deals with, receives, and applies, the atonement to the conscience, purging it from the guilt of sin and from dead works ; it apprehends, receives, and puts on, the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is unto all and upon all that believe ; it is the evidence of our interest in the everlasting love of a Triune Jehovah ; for, ' We have known and believed the love that God hath to us ; ' also of our eternal election ; for, ' As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' By this precious gift of faith, our adoption-character, as children of God, is manifested ; for, ' Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' And furthermore, it is this faith that assures our hearts of our final perseverance : ' For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Now, my dear friends, if it should please the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, to confer these blessings upon our poor needy souls, we shall know by happy experience something of what is *meant* by the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ ; and then both he that sows and they that reap shall rejoice together. May you and I be made earnest in seeking these favours at the mercy-seat ; for it is written, ' Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

Finally, brethren, farewell. The God of love and

peace be with you. So prays your affectionate servant, friend, and brother in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLIII.

Brighton, September 14, 1860.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all those whom Jesus loves at Staining Lane, whether in adversity or prosperity; in the horrible pit and miry clay, or on the mount of communion; in the deep waters of distress, or in the enjoyment of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; whether scorched by the fire of indwelling sin and fierce temptations, from self, sinful self, the workings of Satan, the power of unbelief, the persecution and opposition of sinners, or basking in Divine love, shining in Divine light, and living in and upon that fulness which is in Jesus; whether in sickness or in health.

What, say you, are the same objects of everlasting love, of fatherly tenderness and care, thus variously dealt with by Him who hath said, ‘He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye?’—Indeed they are.—But, you may reply, perhaps they pass through those various states, never to return again. Once delivered, no more trouble; once brought into liberty, no more going back into legal bondage; sin once pardoned, subdued, and brought under, no more experience of its awful working and effects; having once believed in Jesus to the salvation of the soul, no more unbelief, doubting, or fearing.

Not so, my dear friends. It is written, ‘Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.’

To go up and down, and in and out, is, and hath been, my daily experience ; and I know it is the path in which the whole family of God have been called to walk from the beginning until now.

Every professor who is unacquainted with these things, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. But, blessed be God ! all changes are in ourselves, in our experience, and in our feelings ; He that hath loved us with an everlasting love is in one mind, and none can turn Him. His gifts and calling are without repentance. We are as dear to Him, and as precious in His sight at one season as at another, whatever unbelief, or carnal reason, slavish fear, or fleshly feelings, may suggest to the contrary ; yes, and as safe too.

With our united Christian love to yourself and all the friends, I remain, my dear Sir, yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

Brethren, may you be enabled to pray for us.

XLIV.

Brighton, September 21, 1860.

My dear Sir,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all the Lord's hidden ones at Staining Lane ; even with all those who love a secret religion between God and their own souls ; who know, and smart under a sense of the plague of their own hearts ; who really feel that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing ; whose strength is perfect weakness, whose wisdom is foolishness, whose life is hid with Christ in God ; who know that

if they have any faith, they must have it to themselves before God ; who have meat to eat that the world knows not of ; whose hope is often removed like a tree, and yet is revived again, and abides as an anchor, both sure and steadfast, and entereth into that which is within the veil ; whose hearts are ever wandering, wavering, reeling, fearing, doubting, back-sliding, murmuring, complaining, and yet always secretly pleading, seeking, supplicating, longing, desiring, cleaving to, and following after, the Saviour ; their hearts sinking with fear, yet rising in hope ; drawing back through unbelief, but drawing near to God by faith ; contracting and enlarging ; without any bright shining, yet in His light seeing light ; falling and rising, fasting and feasting, sorrowing and rejoicing ; going in and out and finding pasture ; fearing the worst, and hoping the best ; in the valley of Baca, of humiliation, of the shadow of death ; on the mount of communion and of transfiguration ; the feet sliding, yet standing firm on the rock ; in the fiery furnace, but not consumed ; in the deep waters, but not overwhelmed ; hungering in the wilderness, yet fed with manna from heaven ; seeking water, and their tongue failing for thirst, yet drinking of that spiritual Rock, which Rock is Christ.

The foregoing, my dear friends, are some of the sweets and bitters which I daily meet with ; and it is the knowledge and experience of them, which marks the distinction between the children and the bastards ; between the inward and truly spiritual church and that which is only outward and nominal.

To be encouraged by His Word, by the secret

attraction of His love in the heart, by the promised aid of His Spirit, by the buddings of hope, and by the inward operation of faith to draw near to God, and yet to receive no conspicuous answers to prayer, only to be enabled still to watch and pray ; to continue in the path of tribulation, yet to be delivered in it, not out of it, often seems to us as though some strange thing had happened to us. But, my beloved, it is the way, I know it is the way, by which our gracious covenant God, who is the best of Fathers, the only true and faithful Friend, the only infallible Guide, hath appointed to bring all His children home to Himself. 'By these things men live;' yea, 'in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt Thou recover me, and make me to live.'

That the Shepherd of Israel will condescend to be a little sanctuary to you, and bless you with His presence, which is better than life, is the earnest prayer of yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLV.

Brighton, October 5, 1860.

My dear Sir,—May He who hath condescended to become our nearest Kinsman, by taking our flesh and blood into union with His own Divine Person, spread His skirt over you, and over the little flock whom I love in Him, and for His sake, at Staining Lane.

I am glad that I have an opportunity once more of sending you a few lines. I have reason to hope that the Lord has been pleased to attend the message delivered here in His name, with His own almighty power to the poor of the flock that wait upon Him.

When hope is revived and faith increased, when the lawful captives are delivered, the weak hands strengthened, and the feeble knees confirmed ; when those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron, are brought forth to the light ; when slavish fear is quelled, unbelief subdued, the hard heart broken and melted (for the heart may be broken by natural sorrow, or by the sentence of God's holy law, and yet not be melted and softened, so as to produce compunction, contrition, and godly sorrow for sin) ; when there is real repentance unto life, a turning to God, loathing self and admiring the Saviour ; when light is shed upon the path, and fresh life communicated to the soul ; when former experience is opened up and brought back to the memory, so that there are increased desires and longings for more communion, more fellowship with the Saviour (according to Paul, ' That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death ') ; when dew, unction, and savour are communicated and received ; when the sheep hear the voice of the Chief Shepherd speaking to their hearts ; when they lie down in the green pastures, finding both food and rest ; when they are led beside the still waters, and He restoreth their souls, leading them in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake ; yea, when He spreadeth a table before them in the presence of their enemies, and their cup runneth over ; when they are enabled to say, ' Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all my days,' even though they know that a daily cross,

a purging furnace, a Father's rod, and the path of tribulation, are their appointed portion unto the end—I say, when these, and such like effects, are produced in the experience of poor sinners saved only by free and sovereign grace, through the foolishness of preaching, we may safely conclude that God gives testimony unto the word of His grace, and that this gospel is the power of God unto salvation in every one that believeth. And, bless His name, I am not ashamed of it.

What is all preaching and hearing, what is all religion, without this heavenly savour, this Divine power? Surely it is nothing. May we abound and increase therein more and more. Such is the earnest prayer of your willing and affectionate friend and servant in Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLVI.

Brighton, October 12, 1860.

My dear Sir,—Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love: and not to you only, but to all them who know the plague of their own heart, and the preciousness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency of Jesus as their Saviour and Physician; and also those who long to know the cleansing efficacy of His precious blood, so revealed to faith as to purge their conscience from dead works, that they may serve, love, fear, obey, and trust in, the living God.—We commenced this early in the morning, but have had such a succession of visitors as entirely to prevent writing more. I am suffering from severe

cold, hoarseness, and sore throat, which renders conversation difficult; but my spirit is stirred, and whilst the oil flows, I am constrained to speak a word to those who expect to hear something about the Saviour and the things that accompany salvation.

I am compelled to conclude, with the expression of the Apostle, My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLVII.

Brighton, September 13, 1861.

My dear Sir,—I know that you and my other dear friends at Staining Lane will be pleased to know that through the good hand of our God upon us, we arrived here in safety on Tuesday.

This is not our rest, because it is polluted; here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Yet, blessed be God! we that believe do enter into rest: and through His free, sovereign mercy, I have had some foretastes of that rest which remaineth to the people of God. It is a resting from the legal labour and bondage of a broken law, from the covenant of works: 'For he that is entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.'

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, as Paul sheweth at large in Galatians v. But there are other fleshly works, of which he writes to the Romans; even when men go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit to the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

From whence then can good works arise? Oh! they spring from our union to Christ, who saith, 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' The best fruits, both inward and outward, that ever were, or ever can be, brought forth in believers, are the fruits of the Spirit, with their effects; and these are produced only by His dwelling in our hearts: 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' These, and these only, are made fruitful in every good word and work.

But mind what follows. The Saviour saith, 'Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He (the Father) purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' Where there is no purging, there can be no fruit. Now, what is this purging? It is the embittering to us, the removing, of whatsoever is opposed to the well-spring of life within, and draws away the heart from God in its thoughts, desires, and affections. Now, 'the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.'

That all of you may be brought, and may be kept, very near to Him, is my earnest desire. 'Wherefore, my dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.'

We are both invalids; but if it be the Lord's will, He can heal us: and with an apostle I would say, 'Brethren, pray for us,' as I do for you.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLVIII.

Brighton, September 20, 1861.

To my dear Friend, Mr. H., and to all the faithful brethren in Christ who are at Staining Lane, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the Lord permit, I go to Chichester to-morrow evening; and I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in prayers to God for me, that my service may be acceptable in Christ to the brethren there, that I may come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, that the bowels of the saints may be refreshed, and that I may be favoured to experience the fulfilment of that precious promise, which has more than once been applied with power, and a measure of faith given to receive it, 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

And now, my dear brethren, my prayer to God is that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. 'Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God; Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness,' was the prayer of David. To know His will concerning ourselves is a choice favour, even the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began, His purpose of grace and love, to call us with an effectual calling in time; which calling is always attended with a quickening power. Without

this there can be no spiritual obedience. All true obedience stands, not in simply believing the letter of the Word, but in receiving the living and life-giving Word into the heart and conscience, where it works effectually in them that believe. It works by love; and this is the real spring of all true obedience to the will of God, and is that which produces what follows: 'That ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.' Those who look for, or expect fruit from any other source, will be deceived.

The Apostle goes on: 'Strengthened with all might (it is said elsewhere, 'by His Spirit in the inner man') unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.' Ease in the flesh and worldly prosperity can never produce this joyfulness. The joy of the hypocrite differs as much from it as light does from darkness. True joy springs from a good hope through grace; it is given to mourners in Zion, not in the world, for 'the sorrow of the world worketh death.' It is the joy of faith, and is often experienced in the deepest sorrow and affliction, even that joy of the Lord which is our strength.

That you may remember what, and how, you have heard and received, and may hold fast those precious things that accompany salvation, and by which alone you can know your election of God, (for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in some measure of assurance as to your interest therein,) is my earnest and constant desire. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

With our Christian regards to yourself and all friends, I remain, yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XLIX.

Brighton, September 27, 1861.

My dear Sir,—I thank you for your kind letter received last evening; and I am glad to hear that you are still favoured to prove the Saviour's faithfulness to His own promise; for saith He, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I.' It is from His presence, which is better than life, that all our comforts flow; for in His presence is fulness of joy: and He hath said, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

My desire is that both yourself and the dear friends at Staining Lane may be led, like Moses, to turn aside and see that great sight, how it is that the bush burns, and yet is not consumed. The bush was low and weak and small; fit emblem to represent the Israel of God; as it is written, 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' This does not mean, they ought to trust, in a legal sense; but imperatively, they *shall* trust. And so they shall, though they may often fear that they have no faith at all.

The fire represented many things; as, the destroying power of indwelling sin; fierce temptations; the fiery darts of Satan; the many fiery furnaces which try faith; together with outward persecutions. These often seem as if they must

consume the bush. Israel of old was thus tried in Egypt; and so hath the true church of God been tried in this world through all ages. We too have an experience thereof; but, blessed be God! we are not, and shall not be consumed. It is the nature of fire to destroy; but He who sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, both regulates the heat and preserves the bush, that it shall not be consumed.

He exalteth the low tree, and bringeth down the high tree, drieth up the green tree, and maketh the dry tree to flourish. It is the sap of His grace, flowing from His fulness, that preserves the seemingly dry tree, and makes it fruitful, fat, and flourishing; nor shall all the fires that may be kindled, ever consume and burn it up.

I went to Chichester on Saturday, exercised by many fears and trying feelings; but He who condescends to be my Keeper brought me back in safety; and by the testimony of many, confirmed by my own experience, the Master was with us, bestowing His choice favours.

I was enabled to preach to a full congregation here at the Hall last evening. Our friend Mr. H. was there, with whom I have had a refreshing conversation this morning. You will be glad to hear that he is to join us at the Lord's table.

I am compelled to conclude, with love to all, having been interrupted by continual visitors.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

L

Brighton, October 4, 1861.

To the few sheep who have been gathered, folded, and fed by the arm of the Chief Shepherd, at Staining Lane, the under-shepherd wishes a fat pasture, with abundant supplies from the river of the water of life, even that river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

But perhaps you, my dear Sir, and those that are with you, whom I dearly love in the Lord, will be ready, like Israel of old, to say, Can God spread a table in the wilderness? can He also give His people flesh to eat? What is the use of talking about fat pastures in a place where there is nothing but stones, bricks, and mortar, and not a single blade of green grass to be found anywhere?

Well, and does not this state of things represent that which you and I often experience? Yet thus saith the Lord, 'I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; I will even . . . give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.' So that 'the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.'

Now, although this has often been done in the experience of God's poor and needy family, yet every repetition thereof is as a new thing. It is fresh, and refreshes; it is new, and renews, comforts, revives, and restores. By such means God carries

on His own good work in the souls of His dear children ; and it often takes place when and where it is least expected. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' A dry and barren winter precedes a cheerful spring and a fruitful summer ; so the most unpromising circumstances, both as it respects temporal and spiritual things, frequently issue in the most blessed results. The sacred Word abounds with instances of this ; nor can we say that our own experience does not confirm it.

But methinks some poor tried one will be ready to say (what I have but too often feared), O yes, God has indeed appeared for me in all my former exercises, but there is something different in the present trial. It is a path that I have not trodden with my feet. How will this end ?

Why, blessed be God ! there is but one end to every dispensation of God with His family, whatever that dispensation may be ; namely, the display of His glory, by their temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation ; as it is written, 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.'

Yes, but, I have sometimes thought, if all should end well, yet the way is so long, and the path so difficult ; as we read, 'The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.' Nevertheless the Lord saith, 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shalt thy strength be : ' and to the honour of His Divine veracity, I desire to acknow-



ledge that thus far I have found Him to be as good as His word.

My kindest Christian love to all who love me for the Master's sake. I remain, my dear Sir, yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LI.

Brighton, October 11, 1861.

My dear Sir,—What the Apostle says, describes my own experience: 'In every city bonds and afflictions abide me.' Yet, blessed be God! I can say also that none of these things move me from off the Rock of eternal ages, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

I know that you will all regret to hear that my dear wife became seriously ill on Saturday; but I trust she is now improving in health. I believe that we shall have an interest in your prayers and sympathies. It is said that the prayer of faith shall save the sick.

My mind has been dwelling this morning on what Paul writes: 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' By the house and tabernacle are meant the body; called earthly, because it is of the earth. It is the dwelling-place of the immortal soul, of the new man, and the Holy Ghost condescends to make it His temple, notwithstanding all its vileness and corruption.

God did, as it were, prepare this house when He formed man of the dust of the ground ; and then breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

But, through sin, the body has become untenable beyond a limited space ; appointed by the Almighty in infinite wisdom. Afflictions, sickness, and disease waste this framework, as water and fire (to which the afflictions of God's people are compared) dissolve most substances.

‘ But we know that we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ This was prepared in the counsel and purpose of God from everlasting ; and our Lord saith, ‘ In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you.’ By the house is meant heaven ; and by the many mansions are meant the attributes and perfections of God, as light, life, love, &c., in which the saints are said to dwell. The Saviour's preparation consists in His taking possession of that glory that shall be revealed.

Now, all our comfort is derived from the knowledge spoken of : ‘ *We know* that we have a building of God ;’ so that when we put off this tabernacle, we shall not be found naked. For he that by faith and love dwelleth in God, and God in him, here, shall surely dwell with God to all eternity.

I was enabled to preach to a large congregation at Mr. Grace's on Tuesday evening, and I believe that the Master was in the midst, dispensing His favours to the poor of the flock. I have many invitations to

preach, but cannot accept them ; as I desire, if it be the Lord's will, that I may return home strengthened for His work.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.—
Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LII.

Brighton, October 18, 1861.

My dear Sir,—I would say to you and to all who love the truth for the truth's sake at Staining Lane, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee ; the Lord be gracious unto thee, and cause His face to shine upon thee ; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace : send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. Amen.

I was enabled, through the Lord's goodness, to speak in my Master's name at Mr. Wallinger's on Wednesday evening ; and from the testimony of some, I have reason to believe that the word was blessed. I was much cast down in my spirit through the day, by a sense of my own weakness, helplessness, and total inability to speak a good word or to think a good thought ; but when engaged in the service, I was favoured to prove that faithfulness which has followed me all my days. I felt strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and found that His service is perfect freedom.

I can truly say that my heart is with my dear friends at Staining Lane ; and if the good Lord is pleased to renew and continue my strength, I am looking forward in humble hope that I may still be the unworthy instrument of preaching among them

that gospel which is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. I am certainly, through the Lord's goodness, better for this change, but I do not feel strong. All my times are in His hands, who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. I want more submission to His holy will.

And now I must conclude, hoping that the good Lord will condescend to put it into your hearts to pray for me. I do know something of the value of the effectual fervent prayer of faith.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LIII.

Brighton, October 25, 1861.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with the little flock at Staining Lane. Amen.

Beloved in Christ Jesus, it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh. Now, all the rich blessings of the covenant of grace are made sure to, and are bestowed upon, the poor in spirit; as our Lord saith, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' There are two classes of persons who are unacquainted with this spiritual poverty. First, those who are left of God dead in trespasses and sins. These may desire many things; but their wants cannot extend beyond that which is natural. Secondly, those who may have had some workings of a legal conscience, and who know that they are not so good as they should be. These will find a refuge for themselves in a natural perception of the doctrines of grace.

But the truly poor in spirit are those who have been quickened into spiritual life, and whose understandings are enlightened from above. Such are brought to perceive their true state; they know that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing; they find that their heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. They hear of a Saviour, but they find themselves destitute of power to come to, and embrace Him. They approve the method of salvation, but cannot trace in themselves the things that accompany it.

Ah! say some, this describes those who are just brought into the way; but surely, after persons have known the Lord for themselves, they cannot be equally helpless.—Indeed they are; for the Saviour saith, and I know it is true, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ For myself, I must say, that I am as poor, weak, destitute, and helpless as ever I was. And yet, blessed be God! I can do all things, bear all things, and suffer all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me; which strength is not in myself, but in Him, and is only displayed in me as He is pleased to put it forth.

I trust, if it be the Lord’s will, we shall return home on Thursday, the 31st, and be with my dear friends the following Lord’s Day. I want Him to lead me, guide me, rule over me and in me, and to make what use of me He sees good, so that I may be with Him at last. Once more I would say from my heart, Brethren, pray for me, as I do for you.—Yours affectionately in Christ Jesus,

JOHN HOBBS.

LIV.

Worthing, August 29, 1862.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all them at Staining Lane who love our Lord Jesus Christ, and who love me and one another for His sake.

Through the good hand of our God we arrived here in safety on Tuesday, and bore the journey better than I feared, though my dear wife is still very unwell.

I have been thinking of the wonderful cures which have been wrought by the good Physician, when all means have failed. For instance, the woman with her issue of blood, who spent all her living on physicians; and she did right. I am a great advocate for the use of means. She suffered many things from many physicians, but was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.

And this is the state to which the Lord often brings His people: 'Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul;' and sometimes there is no help in man for the poor body. Such are brought to hear of the Saviour, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. They believe the report, for God works faith in their hearts; hence they say, 'If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole.' But oh! how much opposition is felt from the world: unbelief within, and the seeming impossibilities without, would stop the way. Yet there is such a pressing through all these, that at last the trembling hand of faith lays hold upon the Saviour; virtue

proceeds from His adorable Person, and the cure is effected. 'I am the Lord that healeth thee.'

I do find that in all straits, fears, difficulties, exercises, temptations, and discouragements, Jesus is my only refuge. I am led in faith to ask for faith to trust in Him, look to Him, depend upon Him, and make Him my All and in all, even when I seem to have no faith at all.

But I must conclude. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LV.

Worthing, September 5, 1862.

To my dear brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ, assembling at Staining Lane : grace, mercy, and peace be with you. Amen.

I once more address you in my Master's name. And first I desire to offer a humble tribute of praise and thanksgiving to God my eternal Father, for that He has been pleased to love me, the most unworthy of His creatures, with an everlasting love, has chosen me in Christ, given me to Christ, and Christ to me, and blessed me in Christ with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, even in Him.

And I desire to render equal homage to the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God, my most gracious and propitious Lord and Saviour, for that He has condescended from all eternity to undertake my cause, and has made me His own by everlasting love, by eternal choice, by the gift of the Father, by the

purchase of His blood, and by the conquest of His almighty grace in me and over me.

And I no less desire to bless God the Holy Ghost, that He has condescended to quicken my soul into life, to convince me of sin, to call me with a holy calling, from a state of darkness, death, blindness and ignorance, from this world, and the love of it; and that He has been pleased to reveal a precious Christ in my heart, has made known to me the Saviour's atoning blood, His all-sufficient righteousness, the fulness and freeness of His grace, and the beauty, excellency and preciousness of His adorable Person. And He has given me, in some measure, the eye of faith, to see Him; the hand of faith, to lay hold upon Him; and the foot of faith, to go to Him, to believe on Him, receive Him, embrace Him, value Him, and esteem Him, as my All in all for time and eternity.

Yes, I would render to the Triune Jehovah present and everlasting thanks for all His undeserved blessings, mercies, and favours, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Yes, I would loathe myself, and admire Him; condemn myself, and justify Him; put off my poor sinful self, and put on Him; and I would desire to be nothing, that He may be all indeed.

And the greatest burden that I bear in this world, is not the guilt of unatoned sin, the fear of eternal wrath, a poor, weak, sickly body, nor that complication of trials, exercises, and afflictions, which, in infinite wisdom and everlasting love, are appointed for me, and are given to me as my daily portion. You will say then, What is your heaviest burden?

I answer, My poor sinful self; and this burden I must continue to carry, until I put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. But we are encouraged by the Word to cast this, and every other burden, upon the Lord, and He has promised to sustain us.

What, say you, shall we cast our sinful selves upon the Lord?—Yes; for to whom else can we go? Does unbelief work within? Are we plagued with a carnal mind, carnal thoughts and affections, pride, discontent, murmuring, fretfulness, repining, and complaining? Do we feel slothful and peevish, and are we distressed with a bad temper, together with a host of evils, too many to be enumerated, so that we are constrained to cry out, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ and with the Apostle to say, ‘We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened?’ For such a case there is no relief but prayer; effectual, fervent prayer.

But you will say, I cannot pray, and scarcely feel; and yet I am not altogether without feeling.—Well, go and tell the Saviour all about it; keep nothing back; do not wait for a better season, or a more promising opportunity; and He will manage it all for you. I know He will, for He does it for me. He will support you by His almighty power; underneath are the everlasting arms. He will put strength into you by coming Himself; He who is our strength, He will sustain you, by enabling you to believe in Him; which believing is the substance of things hoped for; the ground, confidence, or evidence, of things not seen.

I go to Chichester to-morrow, if God permit ; and I must beg an interest in your prayers, that He will be pleased to make manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ in the hearts of the people.

And now, beloved, I commend you to Him who is able to keep us through faith unto salvation.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LVI.

Brighton, September 12, 1862.

My dear Sir,—May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush attend you, and all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. Amen.

I trust it will be found that my visit to Chichester was not without fruit. The chapel was unusually full ; and from all that I could hear, the word was received in power, love, and meekness. Some told me that it was not so much what was spoken (Text, Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6), as the communication received. Some wept for joy ; and others said they thought the word had never been so sweetly applied to them before. This is very wonderful to me : for indeed I often feel myself to be the most unsuitable instrument that the Most High has ever been pleased to make use of, to communicate spiritual meat to His dear family. But He will send by the hand of whom He will send. Weakness, unworthiness, barrenness, and unprofitableness, together with unbelief, rebellion, impatience, peevishness, perverseness, and many more evils than I can enumerate, these can be no obstruction to the display of Divine Omnipotence ; ever-acting love must and shall triumph over all obstacles.

And thus the Lord has carried on His own work in the hearts of His redeemed family from the beginning.

Oh! how I long to realize and experience a greater display of that almighty power, by which He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Jesus must and shall reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. His and my greatest enemy is my sinful self; and I hail with delight the blessed prospect of that glorious event, when He will swallow up death in victory. 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.'

I shall hope, if the Lord permit, to send you more next week. I am only recovering from the effects of my labour last Lord's Day.

I want to hear about those whom I love in the Lord; how my dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. C. are, also about Mr. S.'s exercises. Indeed, I want to know about you all, for I love you in the Lord, and bear you on my heart before the mercy-seat; and I trust that I am not forgotten by you.

But I must conclude, wishing that you may all be strengthened with might in the inner man.—
Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LVII.

Brighton, September 19, 1862.

To my dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ Jesus at Staining Lane, whom I love in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us and shall be with us, grace and peace be multiplied, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

All the wisdom of this world, if it be destitute of *this* knowledge, will be found to be foolishness in the end. The Saviour says, 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' It is true that God is love, but we can never know Him as such, unless we have been taught to know Him in His justice, holiness, truth, and terrible majesty. They, and they only, can know Him as such, who through Divine teaching are brought to feel and confess, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' Such, being quickened into life to feel, and enlightened to see, their utterly ruined condition, will be constrained to cry with the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

And how is God manifested to us as a God of love? By the gift of His dear Son, whom He is pleased to reveal in our hearts as a Saviour. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And the greatest proof of Divine love that I have ever known, or ever shall know in this world, stands in the gift of Christ, and in Him, and through Him, the forgiveness of sins; together with the perfect righteousness revealed to, and put on by faith. 'They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.'

It is a continual discovery of God's pardoning love

to us poor sinners, that produces love in our hearts to God. Like Mary of old, having much forgiven, we love much.

Now, as we do desire an increase of this precious love in our hearts, I am fully persuaded that we can have it only as we are led to discover more and more of our need of it, in a renewed sense of a continual pardon of that increasing evil which we find ever working within us, and which makes us loathe self and admire the Saviour more and more.

To know God as a Father, by the Spirit of adoption bearing witness with our spirit that we are His children, and producing in our hearts a holy reverence for His name, and a filial fear of offending Him ; this is true wisdom. ‘The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.’ To experience His love in our hearts, drawing us to Christ for pardon, peace, reconciliation, and acceptance with God ; and, though He chasten us sore, yet to know that He loves us still, this is that knowledge of the only true God, which is life eternal.

To know the Saviour, by His voice quickening our souls into life, and opening our hearts by His almighty power, so as to receive Him by faith into our inmost soul, where He condescends to dwell ; to receive the forgiveness of sins, through His most precious blood applied to the conscience, and justification by His all-sufficient righteousness freely imputed and freely received, this is to know Christ indeed.

Union to Him produces communion and fellowship with Him. He knows His sheep, and they know Him who is the good Shepherd. Nothing but His

love to them can ever produce love in them to Him. Thus there is the sweetest intercourse between an Almighty Saviour and poor lost sinners.

How sweet it is when He condescends to reveal the secret of His love in our hearts! This enables us to tell Him of all our sorrows, hopes, expectations, fears, and desires. Thus it is that we cast our burdens upon Him, while His almighty power sustains us. We often fear that we shall be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow; but these fears are groundless: 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'

Now, my dear friends, I desire to bless His holy name, that, through grace, I do know Him as my God and Saviour, my Husband, Father, Brother, and Friend. Yes, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. And so do some of you. This blessed knowledge excels all the wisdom of this world, which is earthly, sensual, devilish.

But I must conclude, earnestly desiring that the Lord will increase this heavenly wisdom in you, my dear friends, that your path may be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—So prays your affectionate servant in Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

LVIII.

Brighton, September 26, 1862.

To the strangers and pilgrims assembling at Staining Lane, elect according to the foreknowledge of

God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.

When this letter is read amongst you on Lord's Day, it will be the thirty-ninth anniversary of the commencement of my poor ministry. Paul tells us to call to remembrance the former days : and I love to think of the wonderful condescension of the Most High ; for He hath remembered me in my low estate, because His mercy endureth for ever. He was pleased to convince me of sin, to put His fear into my heart, to separate me from all my carnal connections, and by a chain of the most mysterious workings, both in grace and providence, to bring me to sit at His feet, and to receive of His words. And I thank Christ Jesus my Lord, for that He hath counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry ; for none could be more unwilling to go. When He said, 'Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,' I said, 'I will not ;' but He was pleased to bow my rebellious will, and to soften and melt my stubborn heart, by applying with Divine power, unction, and savour, the words contained in the sixteenth verse of Psalm lxxi : 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God : I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.' This was my first text. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out !'

When I am led thus to meditate on the Lord's wonderful goodness to me, the most unworthy of all

His creatures, I am constrained to cry out, Why me, Lord ? Why hast Thou thus dealt with me ? It is all of Thine own free, sovereign, discriminating favour. O that I had a heart to love Him more, and trust Him more !

I am fully persuaded that none will ever go in the strength of the Lord God, but as they are brought to see and feel that they cannot go in their own strength. My dear friends, it is only as we are made to know our perfect weakness, that we prove His strength. 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' And again, 'The Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when *He* seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.' And I can truly say that if ever I have grown in anything, it is in a sense of my own weakness, helplessness, unfruitfulness, and unprofitableness. But when I am weak, then am I strong. I can do all things, bear all things, endure all things, and suffer all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me. But without Him I can do nothing. Helpless in myself, but strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, and my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

And if it is His blessed will that I should go in and out before Him a little longer, O may it be in His strength, and in His only !

I desire to make mention of His righteousness alone, first, before God. At a throne of grace, I have nothing to plead but the all-sufficient atonement and

perfect righteousness of my adorable Saviour, for my acceptance before Him. Why should He ever look with complacency upon such a poor sinful worm of the earth? Does it not spring from His own everlasting love, sovereign will, and free choice, in, through, and by the dear Son of His love?

And I ever desire to make mention of His righteousness, and of His only, to His dear family. This is the best robe, the wedding garment, revealed to, and put on by faith; and all that are clothed with it, are justified freely from all things from which they could never be justified by the law of Moses. And they are blessed, who, from a sight and sense of their need, do hunger and thirst for it, follow after it, and seek to know it. All such shall surely find that the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

This blessed righteousness is set at nought by professors, despised by Pharisees, and contemned by those who are righteous in their own sight. But it is highly prized, valued, and esteemed, by poor needy sinners, whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered by it. No arrow from the quiver of Divine justice, no condemning sentence of a broken law, no accusation of conscience, no charge brought by Satan, and no condemnation pronounced by a God-dishonouring world, shall ever pierce such. Death is disarmed of its sting, the grave spoiled of its victory, and they are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power. Yes, and they shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy through His worthiness, righteous in His righteous-

ness, and comely through the comeliness which He hath put upon them. O, my dear friends, may you and I be amongst them!

And now, my beloved, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified through faith that is in Him.

A daily cross is my daily portion, but 'No cross, no crown.' If you are enabled, do pray for me, for I much need your prayers. The Lord enables me to remember you all, as you are in my heart.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LIX.

Brighton, October 3, 1862.

My dear Sir,—I once more address you in my Master's name, together with all the dear friends whom I love in the truth, assembling at Staining Lane. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

My thoughts have been much occupied about the necessity of a real religion. I tremble at the idea of being mistaken and disappointed at last. But this cannot be; for I certainly have been convinced that I am, by nature and practice, a lost, ruined, and undone sinner, without ability or will to help myself in the smallest measure.

Men may believe that they are sinners, that Christ is the only way of salvation, that without repentance all must perish eternally, that every one who enters Kingdom of God must be born again, that all

who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall certainly be saved, and that Jesus, having loved His own which are in the world, loves them to the end. I say that all this, and much more, may be credited, believed, confessed, and preached, and yet those who thus acknowledge these things may themselves be destitute of saving grace.

O, my dear friends, what an awful thing it is for a sinner to be deceived about his eternal state !

What is it to believe, really and truly, in the Lord Jesus Christ ?

A man may believe everything that the Bible declares about this most adorable Saviour, and yet be an unbeliever after all. Real faith is the gift of God, bestowed upon those who are ordained to eternal life, as it is written, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' It flows from sovereign grace : 'By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' It is an effect of almighty power working in us, without any co-operation on our part. It is called a law : 'Where is boasting then ? It is excluded. By what law ? of works ? Nay, but by the law of faith.' And again, 'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt ; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (that is, the object of his faith) is counted for righteousness.' Now, God promises, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

This believing is called a Divine persuasion. 'God

shall persuade Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.' And Paul saith, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day,' when every controversy of Zion shall be decided in truth by the God of truth.

True faith mixes itself with the word of promise, so as to bring it home with Divine efficacy to a poor needy sinner, and opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and all who are dear to Him ; thus working by love. It receives the atonement, to purge the guilt of sin from the conscience. It puts on the righteousness of Christ, by which alone we appear with acceptance before God. Wherever it is, it must be tried with fire. An untried faith is worth nothing. The Lord Himself often tries it by His own Word. It is opposed by unbelief, by natural fears, by the evil of sin working within, by a carnal nature, by the temptations of Satan, by trying providences, and by that abiding sense of evil, both within and without, which must attend us to the end. 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.'

For myself, I find that I can no more maintain the life of faith, or bring it into exercise, than I can create a world : it is God alone who holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. It is that secret life, that hidden life within, of which Paul speaks : 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And I believe through grace that this life of faith shall endure to the end. 'Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three.'

And yet I have often much searching of heart and many fears about it. But 'whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world,' and all other enemies ; 'and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' When faith seems to us to be the most weak, it is strong.

'The Christian often cannot see
His faith, and yet believes.'

Peter thought himself very strong in faith and love, when he said, 'Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.' Long experience has taught me that the lowest place is the best. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' False fire, fleshly excitement, imaginary joy, which are always attended with a carnal savour, are sure to be consumed in the fiery trial : but what God does, is done for ever. True faith stands in the power of God, and the Saviour is its author and finisher. The good Lord increase in us this work of faith.

And now, my dear friends, the Lord bless you, and keep you ; the Lord be gracious unto you, and cause His face to shine upon you ; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen and Amen.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LX.

Brighton, October 10, 1862.

My dear Sir,—May the blessing of the Most High rest upon you and yours, together with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. Amen.

In compliance with the request of Mr. Vinall, I preached at the Hall last evening, from Psalm lxxi. 20, 21. I believe the Lord was with us, for I was greatly helped.

That 71st Psalm I have found very suitable and encouraging, not only as my first public message was furnished from it, but as containing also many very sweet and precious petitions. 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust'—and in whom else can a poor, needy, helpless sinner trust? 'Let me never be put to confusion.'—I often feel much confusion within; for without are fightings, and within are fears: but let me never be put to confusion *in Thy presence*.

'Deliver me'—from sin, from self, from the world, and from the wrath to come—'in Thy righteousness,' Thy faithfulness, and through the righteousness of God our Saviour, freely imputed to, and bestowed upon, one so unworthy as I. 'And cause me to escape'—from all my fears and apprehensions.

'Incline Thine ear unto me'—O, how blessed it is to get His ear at a throne of grace!—'and save me' with an everlasting salvation, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

'O God! Thou hast taught me from my youth'—for I never should have known these precious things if He had not taught me—'and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works' of creation, redemption, grace, and providence. 'Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not'—I believe He never will, and yet I often fear it—'until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation'—the generation of the upright, the chosen generation, even

that generation that seek Thy face, O Jacob—‘and Thy power to every one that is to come’—to every one that shall hereafter be called by the same grace to walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham, and that hears the report of what God hath wrought.

But I must conclude, earnestly desiring that you may be enabled to pray for me, as I am for you all, that if the good Lord should be pleased to strengthen me to labour a little longer among you, He will condescend to bless His word more abundantly to His own glory and the profit of His dear family.—Your willing and affectionate servant in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXI.

Brighton, September 11, 1863.

My dear Sir,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all other my beloved friends at Staining Lane.

I send you this short letter as a token of remembrance. Real union to the Saviour and to one another is manifested by our remembrance of each other. But this is not a simple remembrance, as we remember natural things ; it is a being knit together in love, and abiding in each other's hearts. This, like every spiritual blessing, can only be traced to, and derived from, the fountain of light, life, and love : it is the Saviour's remembrance of us that constrains us to remember one another.

Of Zion He saith, ‘I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.’ This is in allusion to His pierced hands and feet. Each wound in His sacred

body is a token of His wonderful love to poor, lost, ruined, undone, helpless sinners ; and it is only the eye of faith that can discern the matchless love displayed in these precious wounds.

‘Thy walls are continually before me.’ These are walls of salvation ; as it is written, ‘Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.’ It is the salvation of every one of His dear blood-bought family, that is continually before Him. This He is ever working out, in all His dispensations, however contrary some of them may appear to sense. When faith is in exercise, we know that it is well, and that it shall be well ; but in seasons of darkness, temptation, and trial, Zion saith, ‘The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.’ But a true and living faith is to be traced in this very complaint : the words, *My Lord*, are the language of faith. Observe the Lord’s gracious reply : ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget ; yet will I not forget thee.’ ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’

When faith can credit this, and bring it home with a sweet application to our own present condition, whatever that may be, such faith always works by love to the Saviour and to His family ; it brings us near to Himself and them. We cannot forget His wonderful, matchless, and discriminating love to ourselves, and this constrains us to love all whom He loves. Love in the heart is the best antidote against forgetfulness.

Paul saith to the Corinthians, ‘Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men ;’

and so say I to you ; making this request, Brethren, pray for me, that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. I conclude with, ' My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.'—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXII.

Brighton, October 16, 1863.

My dear Sir,—The Lord bless thee, and keep thee ; the Lord be gracious unto thee, and cause His face to shine upon thee ; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace ; and not thee only, but all them also that love His appearing. Amen.

I thank my beloved friend for his letter, and I rejoice to find the good Lord still fulfilling His promise to those who assemble in His name : ' Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

In the former letters * I endeavoured to speak a little about the rich mercy and great love of a Triune Jehovah. Now this mercy is, first, general, as it extends to all creatures, preserving, sustaining, and keeping them alive. But, secondly, it is special and peculiar, as it respects the objects of His everlasting love and eternal choice. They are preserved in Jesus Christ ; not from the consequences of the fall, as sin and death ; yet none of them ever go out of this world until they are quickened into life ; according to the text we were considering : ' But

* The letters referred to have not come to hand.

God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love where-with He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.' That is, first, in a covenant sense ; for when Christ rose from the dead, all His members rose with Him ; but, secondly, each one must and shall, when the time comes to favour Zion, hear the voice of the Son of God for himself, and they that hear shall live.

Without this quickening, whatever profession may be made, there can be no real religion ; but in whomsoever it takes place, such are brought to see, feel, and know, that they are poor, lost, helpless sinners. These, and these only, are the persons who stand in need of God's pardoning mercy. And He hath proclaimed His covenant name as the Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquities, and transgressions, and sins. O how sweet is this pardoning mercy ! When through faith it reaches the heart of a poor, guilty worm, he will exclaim with David, ' I will sing of mercy and judgment ; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.' What ! saith he, are all my sins forgiven ? Have I indeed found favour with God, from whom I have so awfully departed ? Yes, poor sinner, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth thee from all sin. There is no more vindictive wrath, no more condemnation ; thou art reconciled to God by the death of His dear Son. This is mercy indeed, pardoning mercy, cleansing mercy, regenerating mercy, saving mercy ; and O, how precious to every one that feels his need of it, and, like the poor publican, is enabled to cry, ' God be merciful to me a sinner !'

This, my dear friends, is my constant petition, though goodness and mercy have attended and followed me all my days. It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed, because His compassions fail not; they are new every morning; great is His faithfulness. I am convinced that I shall need all this mercy to the end of my days; and, bless His precious name! His mercy is on them that fear Him throughout all generations; it endureth for ever. And such shall be the blessed experience of every poor sinner, who hath nothing to plead before God for his acceptance, but free, sovereign, discriminating mercy, through the precious blood, righteousness, and intercession of an Almighty Saviour. All those who are thus brought to seek mercy, in mercy's way, shall surely find it. Though the vision tarry, still wait for it; thou canst not wait too long.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXIII.

Hastings, November 9, 1866.

To my dear Friend and Brother in Christ, and to the little flock assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane Chapel. Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Though I shall be absent from you in the body when you assemble on Lord's Day, yet I hope to be with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ Jesus.

He says, 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Do not be discouraged, though you are few in number; for though His whole church, when collected together, will form that mighty multitude which no man can number, the various small assemblies of which it is composed may each of them be called a little flock. The Lord says to such, 'Fear not;' for neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Fear not, little flock; remember it is your *Father's* good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Who then, or what, shall deprive you of it? It is the *kingdom* that is promised; that kingdom of God which is within you, which stands in Divine power, and which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is the kingdom of almighty grace: grace, which not only pardons, but cleanses from, and subdues sin. You know, my dear friends, I always assert, and I know that I am borne out by the Scriptures, that in whomsoever sin is pardoned, it is also subdued: 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Every soul that is crucified with Christ becomes dead to sin; and shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? No, God forbid! this cannot be. The flesh may lust against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that ye would; yet thanks

be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom of grace in this present state; grace to pardon sin, grace to cleanse from sin, grace to triumph and reign over sin, and grace to save with an everlasting salvation; and He who has given to His little flock this kingdom of grace here, will give the kingdom of eternal glory hereafter. The reign of grace is the commencement of glory; for while with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Thus glory shall be found to be the perfecting of grace; and thus grace here and glory hereafter are inseparable.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Pray for me and mine; and that I may come to you again by the will of God in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Brethren, farewell; mercy and peace be with you. So prays your affectionate servant in Christ,
JOHN HOBBS.

LXIV.

Hastings, November 16, 1866.

My dear Sir, Friend, and Brother in our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be with you, and

with all those who watch with you at Wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors.

It is at the throne of grace that faith sows the seed of effectual, fervent prayer, while hope and patience wait for the expected crop ; and God says, ' They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.' I have been for some years engaged in sowing this seed, and have been favoured with several answers of peace in the joy of my heart.

Three years ago, when deeply exercised in my mind about many things at Brighton, the Lord's answer was, ' Leave it all with me.' This has been several times repeated since. When I was about to leave Stockwell, the Lord gave me this word, ' Regard not your stuff ; the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.' And when I was called, as you know I have been of late, to pass through a very trying furnace of affliction, my kind and gracious God answered me with, ' The Lord God is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Also, ' He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ?'

I know that my faithful covenant-keeping God is fulfilling these promises on my behalf, and you, my dear friends, shall see it ; and you will join with me in a tribute of praise and thanksgiving to Him who does all things well. I believe that I have been greatly helped by some of you at the throne of grace ; and I do esteem the prayers of the Lord's

people very highly. To have an interest in them, I consider one of my highest privileges.

We spent an hour on Wednesday with an aged servant of the Lord, Mr. Fenner. I had never met him before. He was very kind and affectionate, and rejoiced in the Lord's goodness to me. He thinks that all who fear God through the land, who are acquainted with me, will join with him in the same sentiment.

I intend, if God permit, to be with my dear friends on the 2nd of December. And do beg that I may come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. He says, 'I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt.' 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.'—Yours in Christian love,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXV.

Hastings, November 23, 1866.

To all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane Chapel, their unworthy but affectionate servant in Christ wishes grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—We intend to return home on the 27th, which will enable me, if God permit, to meet my dear friends at Chapel on Wednesday evening. I can say with one of old, 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth;' and, 'A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.'

I have often found that my happiest seasons have been when I have been speaking of Him who is my light and my salvation, my glory and the lifter up of my head, my shield, and my exceeding great reward.

To tell poor sinners about this blessed Saviour, this wonderful Redeemer, furnishes the sweetest theme that can employ a mortal tongue; and I long to meet my dear friends again, hoping that I may be enabled to impart to them again some spiritual benefit. We have often been favoured with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. May such seasons be repeated!

Brethren, pray for me, that I may be furnished for that work to which I have been called. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me; without Him I can do nothing. If He will still condescend to make use of me as an unworthy instrument to feed His flock, He shall have all the praise.

Brethren, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Oh! let us love one another, and pray one for another. Faith and prayer can do wonders. God has done wonderful things for me, and I trust He will make me more useful and fruitful in my ministry than I have yet been. I want to be devoted to spend and be spent, body, soul, and spirit, in the service of the best of Masters, and for the benefit of His dear family.

Brethren, I say once more, pray for me, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be

glorified. I know the value of the prayers of the Lord's people. Therefore let us pray without ceasing, and watch thereunto with all perseverance, for all saints, and for one another.

May the glory of the Lord fill the house of the Lord when we meet again.—Yours affectionately in Him,
JOHN HOBBS.

• LXVI.

Hastings, October 4, 1867.

To the Congregation whom I love in the Lord, assembling for Divine worship at Staining Lane. May grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love, be with you.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—I have been thinking much of the text from which I was led to address you last Sunday. 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God' (Philippians iv. 6). Let not any suppose that I ever meant to imply that the children of God have any power of their own to obey the exhortations given in His precious Word. If they are taken as legal commandments, we are no better off than when we were under the law, which says, 'This do, and thou shalt live.' And they, too, are mistaken, who think that the exhortations are useless, like a dead letter. No: the whole Word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

By the exhortations, some of which belong to the covenant of works, and some to the covenant of grace, God is pleased to discover what is His will concerning His dear children. If they are exhorted to be careful for nothing, it is He alone who enables them to cast all their cares upon Him. He says, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.' The burden may, in a certain sense, still remain; but He shall sustain, that is, enable thee to bear it.

Again, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do.' He lays the burden upon us, which we find too heavy for us to bear; then He makes us willing to cast it upon Him, and in His own time enables us to do this through believing in Him; which faith is His own gift.

It is He who first quickens our souls into life, and then we live; He shows us our true state as lost sinners, and then we see, feel, and know it; He gives us repentance unto life, and then we repent; He begets us to a lively hope, and we hope in His mercy; He gives us faith, and we receive and believe that which He is pleased to speak home to our souls; He communicates His love, draws us by love to Himself, and sheds abroad His love in our hearts; this enables us to love Him, and produces in us love to one another.

I am certain that we can no more obey the exhortations of the New Testament in our own strength, than we can keep the legal precepts of the Old. Shall we then neglect the exhortations? God forbid!

They show us how very deficient we are in everything that is good ; that in us dwelleth no good thing, that is, in our flesh. They lead us to beg of God that He will work in us all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power ; that He will make us what He would have us to be ; that He will form us for Himself, that we may show forth His praise. By His abiding with us, we are enabled to walk by faith with Him. We really do His will, when He condescends to work in us.

Now, for all this He will be inquired of, and He has promised His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He does not deal with us as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, requiring bricks to be made, without giving the necessary material. Whatever God requires of us, He first bestows upon us ; and it is of His own that we offer to Him.

To know and to experience these blessed realities, is to find His yoke easy, and His burden light.

Without Him I can do nothing ; but I can do all things, bear all things, and suffer all things through Christ who strengtheneth me ; and so can my dear friends, whom I love in Him. Ask Him to enable you, and see if He will not be as good as His word. I tell you He will. I have tried Him thousands of times, and He has always been faithful to the most unworthy of His servants. To doubt is our sin ; to believe is His gift. And why should it not be so, since He has all the glory, and we have all the benefit ?

Go on, then, my dear friends, waiting, watching, pleading, supplicating, and intreating, and you shall

never be disappointed of your hope. If you can only say, and that from the heart, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' keep on at it, until mercy comes—mercy to pardon your sins, to clothe you with Christ's righteousness, to regenerate you, to bestow all needed grace, and to make you obedient to Him in all things.

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us inheritance among all them that are sanctified.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXVII.

Hastings, October 11, 1867.

To my dear Friends assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane.

I greet you in the Lord, wishing you all health, peace, and prosperity. I wish to send you a few thoughts, hoping that they may be blessed to the edification and comfort of those whom I love in the Lord.

The watchman should not sleep. They that sleep, sleep in the night; but let us, who are of the day, watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. Our Lord says to the angel of the church of Sardis, 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God.' It was before said of this church, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' Yet there were a few names

in Sardis that had not defiled their garments. These were living souls, though ready to die. The watchman is directed to strengthen these.

Their works were not perfect before God. This does not mean their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ ; this, being God's work, however small the measure, is perfect in its nature. But if we trace the present church-state from its beginning, we shall find that its works have been very imperfect.

Consider the national church at its Reformation. Though it discarded Antichristian doctrines, it retained many Popish forms and ceremonies. Persons were admitted to its communion if they could repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the ten commandments. But in the time of the Commonwealth, Dr. John Owen and Dr. Thomas Goodwin commenced forming churches in England upon the Congregational or Independent plan. They required a scriptural account of a work of grace wrought in the soul ; particularly, evidences of Divine life, before they admitted persons to their communion.

But there has been a great falling away. The Church of England has its thirty-nine articles ; and other Churches have their own articles, drawn up, for the most part, as to doctrine, scripturally ; but there should be something more than a mere assent and consent to Divine truth looked for from those who join in communion. For while, on the one hand, I have always felt that we should not expect what is generally called a full assurance of faith in all who unite at the Lord's Table, on the other

hand, I think that they should possess evidences of spiritual life. They should know and feel their need of a Saviour, and should have an appetite for the provision of His house ; without this there can be no real evidence of their being quickened souls. The more they feel their spiritual poverty, the more welcome to the Lord's Table. He promises to Zion, 'I will abundantly bless her provision ; I will satisfy her *poor* with bread.' I believe that many needy ones have been kept away, through unbelief and Satan's temptation that they have not such a measure of faith and depth of experience as they ought to have before they openly show their love to the Saviour in keeping His commandments. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.'

It is in these respects that the Lord says, 'I have not found thy works perfect before God ;' and to another church, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.'

Further, the Lord says: 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.' *Persons* are intended. They still remain in the church, though in so low a condition as to be ready to die. Like the prodigal, they are starving for want of the bread of life. Either there is none to give them this bread (I mean instrumentally); or, if it is set before them, though they truly hunger, there is not a sufficient measure of faith to receive it. Now, such are to be strengthened and encouraged by the word of promise ; and as

faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, He will so apply His word, that faith shall be increased in the hearts of those who seek Him.

Again, they are ready to perish, having left their first love, through backsliding. Thus the Holy Spirit is often grieved. Now, while this should be pointed out by the ministry, backsliders should be encouraged by such words of promise as these: 'Turn, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you.'

God often communicates the spirit that influences His ministering servants to those who hear them. If the watchman is kept lively in his own soul, diligent and earnest, it is one method by which the Lord leads the people to be watchful and fervent in spirit. Secret prayer, spiritual conversation, public preaching of the word, and a godly example as to outward conduct, are enjoined on the Lord's sent servants. The watchman must be at his post, and God makes use of such means to revive, restore, comfort, feed, establish, and build up His church. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Your willing servant in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXVIII.

Hastings, October 18, 1867.

To the Congregation assembling at Haberdashers' Hall Chapel, their servant in Christ wishes grace, mercy, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—Every day's experience convinces me more and more of the value of a personal religion. It is a secret between God and the soul. When the Lord called Abraham, He called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. When Jacob went to Padan-aram, God appeared to him when he was alone; and when, on his return, he was afraid of Esau his brother, and the angel wrestled with him, he was left alone. Moses was alone, when God appeared to him in the burning bush. David says, 'Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.' Job's friends did not understand his case. Jonah was alone in the whale's belly; Daniel, in the lions' den. When Paul stood before Cæsar, all men forsook him; and the Saviour Himself was left alone, all His disciples fled.

By these, and many similar instances recorded in Scripture, as well as by our own experience, we are taught to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. I believe it is among our greatest mercies, that God is pleased to remove earthly props, to dry up worldly cisterns, and thus to show us the emptiness and insufficiency of all created good. We are taught to know that 'he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:' yea, 'the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.'

We generally think ourselves left alone in our deepest troubles, sharpest trials, and heaviest afflictions; and this is often true, as to human aid; but then God says (and what He promises He is sure to fulfil), 'When thou passest through the waters, I

will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'

It is by such discipline as this, that we are taught to prize a secret religion, that we are led to seek after, and highly to value, private communion with God alone. Communion with the saints is very blessed, but communion with the Lord is better still. He says of His people, 'They shall mourn, every family apart, and their wives apart.' Those who are the most favoured with secret communion, will generally be found to be the most lively and spiritual in their conversation with others. There is nothing makes us fruitful like union to, and communion with, the Saviour.

My dear friends, may we all remember how and what we have heard and received, and hold fast, and repent of our coldness, worldly-mindedness, fleshly savour, and unprofitable conversation. May the good Lord keep us near to Himself, and direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face evermore, for we cannot do without Him. He has loved us poor sinners with an everlasting love ; and though we must reproach ourselves for our base ingratitude, yet, bless His precious name ! we do love Him, because He first loved us. I want this love to be increased more and more in your heart and mine. My dear friends, let us ask for this, and we shall not ask in vain.

And now may the good will of Him that dwelt in

the bush ever attend both you and yours. So prays
your affectionate and willing servant in Him, and for
His sake,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXIX.

Hastings, October 24, 1867.

To my dear Friend and Brother, and to all others
whom I love in Christ, assembling at Staining Lane.
May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all. Amen.

If God permit, I hope to meet my dear friends
November 3rd. I can say with one of old, 'Lord,
I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the
place where Thine honour dwelleth;' and I long
once more to proclaim the unsearchable riches of
Christ, as He is pleased to enable me.

May it please Him to pour out the Spirit of sup-
plication into our hearts, for without Him we can do
nothing. He has promised, 'Lo, I am with you
always, even to the end of the world.' This promise
He will fulfil to His church. Like Moses, we want
His presence to be with us; and this is known by
His seeking and searching out His sheep. Whether
they are in a state of nature, dead in trespasses and
sins; whether uneasy in their minds, dissatisfied
with themselves and with everything else; whether
under the condemning sentence of a broken law;
whether in a state of backsliding, cold, and almost
insensible, He will both seek and search them out.
That is, their state shall be described; the Word shall
be a lamp to their feet and a light to their path.
God shows them where they are; He communicates
life; the entrance of His words giveth light, it giveth

understanding to the simple ; faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ; the Lord makes them willing in the day of His power, willing to be nothing, that Himself may be all in all ; draws them with the cords of love, as with the bands of a man, and gives them a hearty welcome to all the blessings and privileges of His family.

When the Lord took possession of the tabernacle in the wilderness as His dwelling-place, and afterwards of Solomon's temple, it was known by fire, which descended upon the altar, and consumed the burnt offerings. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles as tongues of fire. All this represented God's love in the hearts of His dear children : for God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him. This precious love warms, enlightens, and comforts poor sinners. Wherever it is enjoyed, there is God's presence.

He reveals to the guilty the pardon of sin, brings near His righteousness to those who hunger and thirst after it, communicates the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father ! He feeds the hungry with good things, such as the fatted calf, the hidden manna : yea, He blesses Zion's provision, and satisfies her poor with bread. Some of His dear people get a word of reproof, or of encouragement, or of caution, or of direction in the way, or of spiritual instruction. He has always some favour to bestow, some blessing to communicate. His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.

These are some of the blessed realities that we

have been favoured to enjoy together in days that are gone by. They are evidences of His presence, tokens of His love. We want a continuance thereof; and may the good Lord continue to bless us in like manner, and more abundantly, when we are permitted to meet again.

Brethren, pray earnestly, cry mightily, importune constantly for a blessing, and you shall not seek in vain.

You know, and I know, that the poor, weak, helpless instrument can of himself do nothing, but he can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him. I want the blessing first for myself, and then that it may be communicated to you through my unworthy instrumentality. May we seek Him earnestly, and we shall surely find Him, for He hath said: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' either as the God of grace or of providence.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXX.

Surbiton Hill, May 1, 1868.

To my dear Friend and Brother, and to all other my beloved Friends assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane Chapel. Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—I send you this letter that you may know how greatly I long after you

all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. You are very dear to me for His sake. My being laid aside like a useless branch, is a heavier trial to me than the illness which has caused it; but I would desire to stir you up by putting you in remembrance of the things that you have heard of me.

I need not particularize to you the great and fundamental truths of the gospel. These you well know. But there is one blessed truth to which I more especially desire to direct your attention, namely, the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the hearts of His saints; for without this we cannot be Christians indeed: 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' A person may hold the doctrines of Calvin, may profess all Bible truths, and yet, if he is not renewed in the spirit of his mind, he is still in the flesh; he is yet carnal.

The Lord says that all Zion's children shall be taught of Him, and that great shall be the peace of her children. And the Saviour says: 'Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' This teaching is by the Spirit of God, whose prerogative it is to lead and guide us into all truth; so that you see a person may acknowledge the deep things of God, without having any personal interest in them.

It has been my desire, not only to proclaim to you the great doctrines of the gospel, but also to insist upon the necessity of an experimental acquaintance with them. Without this, all religion is vain, all profession empty and useless. 'They that are joined to the Lord are one spirit.' It is

this that manifests our union to Him ; and it is this, and this alone, that can make us fruitful in every good word and work. Himself says : ‘ As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.’

I know not what the Lord’s will may be concerning myself, but I do most earnestly desire that the things which you have heard of me you may hold fast ; that you, my beloved, may endure unto the end ; that you may be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. We live in an evil time, and the love of many has waxed very cold to the Lord, to His truth, and to His church. I cannot help fearing that we are approaching very near to the time when Antichrist shall accomplish the scattering of the power of the holy people, when Protestant worship shall be suspended for a time. I know that many are prepared to smile at my fears ; so it was with Lot’s family, when he warned them of the destruction of Sodom. The Ritualists are openly assisting the man of sin, they exhibit his mark in their foreheads. The dead Calvinists, both in the national church and out of it, the Arminians, Unitarians, Socinians, and Rationalists, together with the whole army of infidels, are all banded together to build up the kingdom of Antichrist. They act from different motives, but their object is the same.

There is another trap of Satan, in which *the people of God* are in danger of being caught. The time fixed by Mr. Huntington for the triumph of the man of sin is past ; and therefore those who relied

implicitly upon all that he said, may be ready to suppose that the whole of his interpretation of the prophecies is wrong. I do not wonder that he was mistaken as to dates, for our Lord says in another case, 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man.' But if Mr. Huntington has erred with respect to the exact time, yet I believe that his interpretations in the main will be found correct.

I fear that God's witnesses, as to their public testimony, are about to be silenced for a short season. Therefore I would say to every one of you: 'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' I am persuaded that the truths you have heard of me will do both to live and die by.

And now what shall I say more to you, my dear friends? I will adopt the Apostle's language, 'Brethren, pray for us.' Some of my happiest seasons have been when I have been proclaiming among you the unsearchable riches of Christ. If it be His will, I desire still to be found in His service. To be instrumental in making known to great sinners a still greater Saviour, is the most blessed employment that one who has found mercy of the Lord can be engaged in.

And now, my beloved, I commend you to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.—I remain, yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXI.

Worthing, November 6, 1868.

My dear Sir,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with the little flock at Staining Lane.

Paul told the churches how greatly he longed after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. I have been meditating a little about this love, feeling its constraining power towards you in my own heart. God Himself is the fountain and source of this love, for 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him;' and by this we know that we love God, when we love the children of God.

God the Father hath displayed this wonderful love towards us, in that He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. This love was openly manifested in the gift of His dear Son; for 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Now, as the Father loves His dear Son, so He loves us, as His children; and as Christ loves the Father, so He loves us, as His own brethren, and hath manifested this love in laying down His life for us: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' He loves His whole Church, as He is her Husband: 'Thy Maker is thy Husband: the Lord of hosts is His name.'

The Father's love was tried by the gift of His dear Son: the love of the Son was tried by the

Father's laying upon Him the iniquity of us all. He is a tried corner-stone. We tried His love, when we all fell in Adam, and became His enemies through sin: and how did you and I try His love through the natural alienation of our hearts from Him! He says: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.' We have often grieved His Holy Spirit, through unbelief, through rebellion against Him, through disobedience, through forgetfulness of His great goodness, and through that coldness, neglect, and carnal insensibility, which continually works in us. Yet, bless his precious name! He still loves us; for, having loved His own which are in the world, He loves them unto the end, and I believe that nothing shall separate us from this wonderful love.

Now, having through grace some little experience of this astonishing love in my own heart, I am constrained to love you, not only because you have been kind to me, but because you are dear to the Lord. That love which constrains us to love Him, teaches us also to love one another. This is the motive, the moving principle. It is His image discovered in the saints which leads them to love one another. If I love Him because He has first loved me, I *must* love all those whom He loves. It cannot be otherwise, for 'the love of Christ constraineth us.' How can a man say that he loves God, if he does not love the children of God?

Believing, as I do, that the Lord has kindly owned my ministry, in blessing it to your souls, this constrains me to love you, and to pray continually for

your welfare ; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him ; that you, with myself, may be favoured with rich communion and fellowship with Him, with more conformity to His ever-blessed image, and with more love to one another and to all saints.

Brethren, pray for me, that if it be the Lord's gracious will, I may be again given unto you, and that I may come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. My love be with you all in Him. Amen.—Yours most affectionately,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXII.

Worthing, November 13, 1868.

To my dear Friends assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane Chapel. May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all. Amen.

I feel desirous of communicating to you some of my thoughts respecting the Church of Christ at the present time. I think that Zion is low, in a low place ; by which I mean that the Lord's dear people are not much favoured in their own souls. It seems to me that few enjoy a large measure of communion with God ; that spiritual-mindedness is at a low ebb ; that because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold ; that there is not much earnestness in prayer and seeking the Lord's face. Now we know that He is rich in mercy towards all that call upon Him, abundant in goodness and truth ; that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for

ever, and that He has promised that the Comforter shall abide with His church to the end. Meditating on these things and many others, I am led to inquire whether there is not some procuring cause why the Lord's dear people should seem to be so far from Him.

I cannot help thinking that many of us are not sufficiently concerned about the beginning of the work in our own souls. Bunyan represents Formality and Hypocrisy as being in the way, but then they came tumbling over the wall: Ignorance went very far in the way; but none of these came in by the wicket-gate. Our Lord says: 'He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' He tells us that Himself is the door; and says: 'By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture;' by which I believe we are to understand that as He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, all that enter in by Him are quickened into life through hearing His voice. His words are spirit and life; and it is the spirit that quickeneth.

The same truth is further illustrated by what our Lord says in the close of His sermon, Matthew vii. and Luke vi: 'Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock.' This digging deep certainly intends much heart-searching self-examination as to the foundation of our faith and hope.

Is Christ the object, the sum and substance of these? And how did we come by this faith and

hope ? Are they the result of the mere reading of the Word, or are they produced in us by a Divine power ? as Peter says : ' Begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ; ' and James : ' Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth.'

Now, my dear friends, I feel convinced that if we do not begin aright, we shall not end well. It is not enough to inquire, Do I believe ? or, Do I hope ? but, What is the nature of my faith and hope ? Do they work by love to God and His people ? Do they stand in the power of God, and are they maintained and kept alive by that power ? Are they associated with the fear of God, and do they embrace whatsoever is found in His holy Word, rejecting all the doctrines and commandments of men ?

I cannot help fearing that there is but little, very little, of this self-examination among professors, and that the real children of God are at the present time slothful, not followers of God as dear children. I know that without Him we can do nothing ; but that constant cry which He produces in our hearts, ' God be merciful to me a sinner,' is very available. Digging deep, digging about the roots of our profession by self-examination, is very profitable. ' If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.'

For myself, I must acknowledge that I am a sad backslider ; and yet, through His free, sovereign mercy, I do believe that He will heal all my backslidings. And He will heal yours, my dear friends,

if He is pleased to enable you to confess them before Him, and to feel within after that power in which His kingdom stands. A religion without the Spirit's influence, without His quickening, reviving power, must sooner or later wither away. The Saviour says : 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' And then we must not be surprised if many afflictions attend our path. 'Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' Where there is but little purging, there will not be much life or fruit.

My dear friends, though absent from you, I do not forget you, and I hope you do not forget me at the mercy-seat. You may be few in number ; but 'Who hath despised the day of small things ?' You know the promise of His presence is made to two or three who assemble in His name. May you be favoured with this crowning blessing.

And now, my dearly beloved, may the Lord bless you and keep you ; may He make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you : may He lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Such is the earnest prayer and sincere desire of your companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXIII.

Worthing, November 20, 1868.

To my dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ, worshipping at Staining Lane. Mercy and truth be with you. Amen.

‘He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.’

This blessed *He* can be no other than the eternal Word, by whom all things were created at first. But, alas! sin has ruined the beautiful creation of God; man, who was its original head, has sunk lower than any of the creatures which were subjected to him. But Jesus says, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’

This respects the regeneration of His covenant family; for, ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.’ He receives a new life, which is manifested by new principles, new desires, renewed affections, a sight and sense of his need of new blessings, which he had, and could have, no desire for, before this life was communicated to him. Like the prodigal, he wants new and living bread. He is brought under the new covenant.

It is remarkable that those who are renewed in the spirit of their mind, generally appear to be the last and the least among professors. There are last that shall be first, and there are first that shall be last. Those who are born only after the flesh, are usually the most prominent in society. Cain was born before Abel, Ishmael before Isaac. Esau was Isaac’s first-born, according to the flesh, but God gave the blessing of the firstborn to Jacob. We read of the children of the bondwoman, and those of the free. The covenant of works was in the world before the covenant of grace.

The children of the bondwoman are usually distinguished by their servile spirit. They work hard for life, as did the elder son in the parable of the

prodigal, and then look to the mercy of God to supply their deficiencies. But the children of the freewoman are so far emptied of self, that they are brought to depend upon the free mercy, grace, and favour of God in Christ Jesus for every blessing here, and for eternal glory hereafter. 'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.'

Then, say some, these care nothing about fruitfulness.—This is a great mistake; for those who are drawn to Christ by love, will be far more anxious to please Him in all things, than those who are driven by fear. The work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, are performed in them under the influence of a free spirit; they delight themselves in the Almighty, and in the abundance of peace and truth.

The children of the bondwoman can never be satisfied: like the daughters of the horse-leech, they are continually crying, Give, give. Conscience is not satisfied with dead works. This may be seen in Popery: confessions, fastings, penances, and all the legal labour they can perform, can never satisfy; they can never know when enough has been done to secure eternal salvation. And if we look through the various denominations of professors, we shall find that they are all in the same state of uncertainty.

Nothing can ever appease Divine justice, or pacify a guilty conscience, but the precious blood and all-sufficient righteousness of Immanuel. And this is

known and received only through the teaching of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father reveals His dear Son in the heart ; Christ manifests Himself to poor needy sinners ; and the holy and ever-blessed Spirit takes of the things that are Christ's, and makes them known.

The children of the bondwoman never can, and never do, love those of the free. Ishmael could never be reconciled to Isaac, nor could Esau ever love Jacob. To work in chains under the galling yoke of a broken law, to be compelled to do many things, and yet, as the elder son in the parable says, never to receive a kid to make merry with their friends, this indeed seems very hard. But, blessed be God ! those who are favoured to live and work under the influence of a free spirit, who are drawn to God by His love, under a continual sight and sense of their own weakness, helplessness, and insufficiency, yet having an all-sufficient supply in Him who filleth all in all, find Wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and her paths to be paths of peace. Though often cast down on account of the way, they are again and again holpen with a little help.

Such a religion as this is better than anything in nature. This I know, blessed be God ! by happy experience. God has been my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble through all my days ; and though I am continually sinning against Him, by calling in question His truth and faithfulness, and frequently doubting as to my interest in them, yet He changeth not. I have ever found Him to be the same constant, unchangeable, and almighty Friend,

the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. And you will find Him to be the same, even all who are brought to trust in Him. 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of ages.'

And now may the Saviour condescend to fulfil His promise of being a little sanctuary, both to you and me, in all places whithersoever we are scattered in the cloudy and dark day, for I do believe that a very dark day is before Zion ; but

'He that hath helped us hitherto,
Will help us all our journey through.'

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.—
Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXIV.

Worthing, November 27, 1868.

To my dear Friend and Brother, Mr. H., and to all my dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ, assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane Chapel. I greet you in the Lord.

Beloved in Christ Jesus,—I am looking forward with desire to the 6th of December, when I hope through the mercy of God we shall again meet, to commemorate the precious love of the Saviour in dying for poor sinners, by breaking of bread ; and if it should please my gracious Lord to speak once more by the mouth of His unworthy servant to the hearts of some of His dear family, I shall rejoice indeed.

You and I know that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. It is to enjoy that power, renewing, reviving, and restoring our souls, that I

earnestly desire. How long we may be favoured to meet together in the Saviour's name, I know not. I believe that a hot furnace is preparing for Zion ; but He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. The church has had a long season of outward prosperity : and though I believe that all His dear family are called to bear their own personal cross, yet outward prosperity has in all ages been found more or less to produce a state of general declension as to spiritual things. God will revive His work in the midst of the years ; but I cannot help fearing that it will be through severe trials. The Saviour says : ' Every branch in me that beareth fruit, the Father purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' If it be so with particular branches, how much more with the whole church !

My dear friends, I am convinced that the church of Christ is at present surrounded by very intricate and trying circumstances. Indeed I cannot tell what to wish for, as to outward things. Nothing but constant, fervent, earnest prayer and supplication can be of any avail ; but then, alas ! I fear but few, very few of us, see the danger to which we are exposed. Our hearts are too cold and indifferent with respect to the present times. May we all be enabled to cry earnestly to God for a fresh manifestation of His power, for the outpouring of His Spirit into our hearts ; that He will be pleased to show us the path wherein we should walk ; that He will separate us more and more from this world, professing and profane ; that He will teach us to do His will, and lead us into the land of uprightness.

My mind has been much exercised of late about public affairs. I do not wish to enter into politics, but I do see that the real people of God are in a very trying position. Brethren, pray without ceasing. Whatever may be our danger, all our safety is in Christ. There is nothing like cleaving closely to Him, seeking His face, meditating on His Word, asking counsel of Him, and waiting upon Him continually. These I have ever found to be the only means which God will own and bless.

I have been called to pass through many deep personal trials ; and, to the honour of Him who hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' I am constrained to own that He has been my stay and support ; and therefore I am encouraged still to trust in Him, both for myself and for the whole family of God. If we have no strength, no wisdom, no righteousness of our own, He will be our strength, wisdom, and righteousness, yea, our All and in all.

I trust that we shall meet again before Him, and that He will condescend to grant us His presence, and put the word of eternal life and eternal truth into the heart and mouth of the most unworthy of His servants, and that we shall all find it good to wait upon Him.

Though now absent from you in body, I trust our united supplications shall come up with acceptance before Him, through the Mediator of the better covenant. My dear friends, all things are possible to him that believeth. Faith and prayer have wrought wonders. Do let us seek for an increase of faith, and for the Spirit of supplication, from

Him who knows how to give good gifts unto His children.

Beloved, farewell for the present, until we are favoured to meet again. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXV.

Hastings, October 8, 1869.

To my dear Friend and Brother in Christ, Mr. H., and to all others who love me for the Master's sake, assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane,—Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

I have been thinking of what our Lord said to His disciples concerning professors: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Both good men and bad men are in Scripture compared to trees, plants, &c. And John says, 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' And our Lord says, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He (the Father) taketh away.' As there are two sorts of trees, branches, &c., so there are two kinds of fruit. For the description of these, I must refer you to Gal. v. 19–23. The one kind is called the works of the flesh, the other, the fruit of the Spirit. The former are done by man, and are natural to him; the latter is produced in God's covenant family by the indwelling of the Spirit, and is therefore called, the fruit of the Spirit.

Now I find that I possess in myself two distinct

principles, flesh and spirit; and I am obliged to own that the former is too often the most lively and active. This sometimes brings me into a strait, and I am compelled to ask my dear Lord and Master whether He has implanted any good thing in me. I know all the evil is from Satan and myself, and if there is any good, it comes from above; and blessed be God, that amidst all the defilement of my polluted nature, I am not destitute of the fruit of His Spirit.

The first of these is love; and He knows that I love, or desire to love Him, because He enables me to believe that He first loved me. I love His Word, His ordinances, His people, and His ways. There is a great deal said in our day about love. Now I am persuaded that it is quite possible to love the world (that is, the men of the world, together with all that is fleshly and carnal), while there is no love to God and His people. This is seen every day.

The evil that I find working in myself often makes me groan, and I am ready to say, Can any good thing dwell in such a heart as mine? And yet, bless His holy name! I am enabled to believe that He Himself dwells in it, and that Christ is formed in me the hope of glory. O, my dear friends, what a conflict is continually going on! ,the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would.' I believe that every one of God's dear children feels and sees much more evil in himself than others can see in him; and, blessed be God!

notwithstanding all the evil, there is some good fruit brought forth in them all. And it is by this fruit that we are to know them.

Where sin reigns and rules, Satan has the dominion ; but where Christ sways His sceptre, the fruit of the Spirit is sure to be more or less brought forth.

But, some may say, did not Abraham, Lot, David, and Peter sin ?—They certainly did, but they did not live in sin. For ‘how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ?’ To fall through temptation, is a sore grief to those who are tempted ; as may be seen in David, Peter, and others. But to persevere in any known sin, is to be led captive by Satan at his will ; and such are sure to be led into hell, if the mercy of God does not prevent.

Knowing these awful truths as I do, you need not wonder that I am very jealous concerning my own sinful self, and that I would be very watchful over myself and all those with whom I am connected in spiritual bonds, ever desiring to remember that ‘except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.’ Yet this is no reason why he should cease to be watchful.

There are two things which often employ my deep attention. First, that I may be assured that there is the real and genuine work of God within me ; and though I believe this, I want continual tokens of His love to confirm it. Where there is love in the heart, we cannot hear too much about love. I want to be made fruitful in every good word and work.

And, second, I want to have renewed assurances concerning my call to the ministry, by its effects. I am often grieved that I do not hear more concerning conversion work. I want, if it were the Lord's will, to be instrumental in turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But I know the Master of the house has appointed each servant to his work ; and 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.'

If the Lord enables me, I shall probably tell you about being a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord in my next. I love to be an in-door servant. Such become acquainted with the family, by mingling with them, in their wants, wishes, desires, and enjoyments. I love the society of the Lord's dear family, and I never wish for any other.

Allow me to add, what I have often said, Brethren, pray for me. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXVI.

Hastings, October 15, 1869.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,—I presume that some of you will assemble together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on Sunday morning at Staining Lane. Your old weather-beaten servant sends you the following thoughts, that you may know that he has not forgotten you, either at the mercy-seat or in the house of prayer.

In my last I spoke concerning what our Lord says :

‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ There are both fruits of the flesh, and fruits of the Spirit. By the one we know what we are in ourselves; and by the other the Lord graciously shows us what we are in Him: ‘They that are joined to the Lord are one spirit.’ I noticed Galatians v, where we read: ‘Now the works of the flesh are manifest,’ &c., too often manifested in ourselves, and sometimes discovered in others. ‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love,’ &c., love to God, love to Christ, and to His family; which love is shown by a choice like the Psalmist’s: ‘I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.’

I promised to send you some thoughts about being a doorkeeper. First, here is a comparison between the house of God and the tents of wickedness. The one is called *a house*, because of its stability, and signifies the church of the living God; for although the saints are continually exercised with many changes, yet their dwelling in Christ is unchangeable. Even their transfer from earth to heaven by death, is no real change as to their being in Christ. Here, it is in grace; there, it will be in eternal glory.

But the wicked and his dwelling-place must perish. The latter is aptly compared to *a tent*, to be soon overthrown and destroyed.

‘*A doorkeeper.*’ We all know the use of a door. It is to give admittance to something beyond it. Now, when Adam sinned against his Maker, the door of mercy was closed against himself and all his posterity. God placed cherubim and a flaming sword

(the sword of Divine justice), which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Christ says, 'I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved;' the door into the favour of God, into the church of God, into a state of grace, and of eternal glory hereafter. Furthermore, the Saviour says, 'He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth;' so that Christ Himself is the door, or the way. By *the porter* I understand Divine Justice, which the Saviour fully satisfied, when He suffered the punishment due to sinners. Then Justice sweetly smiled, and said, 'I am faithful and just to forgive sins.' First Christ entered in by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us; and we follow Him, through that blessed atonement, even into heaven itself.

But again. A doorkeeper is one who watches daily at Wisdom's gates, and waits at the posts of her doors. Such a one represents a poor sinner, who sees the happiness and security of those who have an interest in Christ, and longs to participate in the same. He is all attention to hear what God says in His Word, by His servants, and by the conversation of those who have been admitted into the Saviour's presence. He longs to enter in himself, but, as yet, the door of faith has not been opened to him. He is like one who watches and waits about the outside, longing for the Saviour to say, 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?' David says: 'My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning.'

And such will continue to wait about the doors, until they obtain admission through believing ; and God says, 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.'

Now, I am fully persuaded that the fruit of Divine love is already in the heart of such waiters, though it is not yet brought forth.

But, you will say, there must be something more than this intended by a doorkeeper.—Yes, there is. You know a porter, or a doorkeeper, is a servant. And David says he had rather be among the servants of God, actively engaged in the work of their Master, than dwell at ease among the wicked. Paul says: 'We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.' Thus, you see, God's own servants are to wait upon the family, and this they feel to be one of their highest privileges. They are both rulers and servants in the household of faith. They receive the highest honour, while they occupy the lowest room.

But, you will say, how are God's servants said to be *doorkeepers*, or to open the doors? This I will endeavour to answer in my next, if my Master is pleased to enable me.

Need I say that I shall always be glad to hear from any of my dear friends? I trust they are not permitted to forget me. I can assure them they are not forgotten by me.

Little children, my love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXVII.

Hastings, October 21, 1869.

My dear Friend,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all them that love me for the truth's sake at Staining Lane.

I have already reminded you of what our Lord says: 'By their fruits ye shall know them;' and that the fruit of the Spirit is love; which love is expressed by the Psalmist when he says, 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,' &c. And I believe this is the choice of all poor sinners who are taught of God.

As I have already observed, a doorkeeper is a servant; and this is descriptive of a minister of the new testament. Our Lord says to the Philadelphian church, 'I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.' And He says to His ministering servants, 'Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.' From this we gather that they themselves must have an experimental knowledge of the way of life, and of that pathway in which there is no death, before they can describe it to others.

The first door, or gate, that a lost sinner, who shall be saved by grace, enters, is spiritual life. When Christ, who is our life, is preached, and the Spirit of life accompanies the message to the soul of a lost sinner, this gate, or door, is displayed, and the sinner, being quickened into life, enters into

the state of life, which is the first evidence of an interest in the Divine favour. He has no *assurance* of his life—no, he is killed, or suffers death, by the legal sentence; but he is brought into *the state* of life, for he both feels, sees, and knows the state of condemnation in which he is; and the dead know nothing.

The next door the sinner enters, is the door of faith. The Lord is said to have opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; and the sinner enters by it, when faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. *Now* he believes that word, though it condemns him. He is not yet able to lay hold, by faith, of the Son of God as his Saviour; but he earnestly longs to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And in God's own time, this further degree of faith is wrought in his heart; as it is written, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'

Now, when the word of God is faithfully preached, all these doors are exhibited as standing open to every poor, needy, sensible sinner, whom God in the day of His power makes willing to come.

The third door which I shall mention is the door of hope. God says, 'I will allure her' (His Church), 'and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart; and I will give her . . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope.' And Peter says that we are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; that is, the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of this hope. When all hope and expectation of a sinner's salvation has been cut off

by the condemning sentence of God's most holy Word, and this is known in the conscience, for such a sinner to be raised to a state of hope, is like a resurrection from the dead. By this door he enters into a more comfortable state of mind. He begins to hope at times that God will have mercy upon him, that his sins *may* be pardoned through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. And Paul says we are saved by hope. It is one of the blessed effects of Divine grace, one of the things that accompany salvation; and it should be highly prized by those who have some experience of its comforting and reviving influence. O, my dear friends, what an unspeakable mercy it is for a poor sinner to be favoured with a good hope through grace! It is indeed an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and enters into that which is within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered. When mariners who are tossed upon the troubled sea cast anchor, the anchor is necessarily out of sight, yet the ship rides out the storm in safety. And so, in a spiritual sense, we sometimes can scarcely discern either faith or hope, yet *the God* of hope sustains and upholds us by His almighty power, and frequently fills us with all joy and peace in believing.

When these things are proclaimed, and God gives testimony to the word of His grace, so that poor sinners enter into, and have an experience of them, such preachers are doorkeepers in the house of the Lord, in the sense intended by Paul, when he says: 'We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building;' and they love their work. I can through grace truly say, 'I

had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness ;' or, with Moses, I would rather suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

If the Lord enables me to send you another letter, I will, if He permits, tell you a little more about these doors and gates, and what it is to enter in by them.

As to my bodily health, I must still crave an interest in your prayers. You know James says, 'The prayer of faith shall save the sick.' Wishing you all to drink deeply into that covenant fulness which is in our adorable Saviour, I remain yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXVIII.

Hastings, October 29, 1869.

To my dear Friends assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you. Amen.

The subject of my former letters was taken from what our Lord said of professors : 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Of the fruits of the Spirit I have written, particularly of love, which is the greatest : 'Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity'—and that this love is manifested in the heart of a quickened sinner, by the choice which he through grace is enabled to make : 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' He had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Doors and gates are either for admission or exclusion. Doorkeepers are servants, such as watch at



Wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors. They may represent those whom God is pleased to appoint to go through the gates before His family, in casting up, or describing, the way in which He leads them.

I have spoken of the gate of life, by which we pass from death to a state of life, being quickened by the Spirit; of the door of faith, by which we are delivered from a state of total unbelief; and of the door of hope, by which we begin to draw nearer to God.

The next I shall mention are the gates of righteousness. 'Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.' The heavenly Jerusalem has twelve gates, and every several gate is of one pearl. We know that our Lord is the Pearl of great price, and that it is by Him, as the Lord our Righteousness, that we come before God with acceptance. It is by faith in Him who is our only righteousness, that we can draw near to a just and holy God as our covenant Father. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. All the prophets of the Old Testament proclaimed the promised Messiah as the Lord our Righteousness. And Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for he says: 'Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith;' and also says that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. When a poor sinner is enabled to believe in Christ for himself unto justifi-

cation of life, then he does God's commandments ; and 'blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' It is by faith in Christ alone that we enter experimentally into the favour of God : 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access into this grace wherein we stand,' (that is, the state of grace,) 'and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

Now, every sent servant of God proclaims this truth—that all who believe in Christ alone for justification and salvation are passed from death unto life—this is their admission ; and that those who believe not are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth upon them. As faith is God's gift, and comes by hearing, those who preach these truths faithfully may be said to watch at Wisdom's gates ; and they watch the goers and comers with much prayer, love, and anxious care.

The next gate I shall mention is praise. Zion is to call her walls Salvation, and her gates Praise. It is by entering in and going through this gate, that poor sinners enjoy the greatest amount of happiness that they are capable of experiencing in the time-state ; indeed, it is by this that we have the most sweet and intimate communion with Father, Son, and Spirit.

We praise Him for what He is to us, for what He has done for us, for what He has wrought in us, for what He has promised to us, and for what He has prepared for us. We praise Him, as our only, our

best, our dearest, our most beloved portion in this world, and in that which is to come. And, bless His precious name! *He* condescends to praise *us*, solely through, and on account of, His own grace. He says, 'There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her.' 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.' We are comely through His comeliness, righteous in His righteousness, holy in His holiness. Zion is the perfection of beauty; and the vilest of sinners saved by free and sovereign grace reflects the beautiful image of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person. What wonderful language is this: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;' and, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Thus He acknowledges and praises His own workmanship, and we celebrate the high praises of Him who is our All and in all.

O, my dear friends, do you all seek to enter in by this gate of praise.

Some of you may say, What will enable me thus to praise God?—Hear what Zion says: 'O Lord, I will praise Thee; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.' Seek for the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins, and never give up till you attain to it.

You will say, Shall I never attain to it?—The

Saviour says, 'Seek, and ye *shall* find.' Seek by constant, earnest, fervent, never-ceasing prayer and supplication, and you shall obtain that which you are seeking after. 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem ; praise thy God, O Zion.' May each of us be enabled to say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.'

We intend, if the Lord permit, to return home on Tuesday next ; and feeling desirous to meet my dear friends as soon as I can, I will, God enabling me, preach on Wednesday evening, Nov. 3rd. And I do hope that I may be favoured to come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. I do beg all of you to intreat the Lord for me. If you sow the seed of prayer at the throne of grace, you may expect to reap a rich harvest of blessings from the pulpit. You know my text at the beginning, 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God : I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.' This has been, and still is, through grace, my determination.

I thank my friend, Mr. P., for his kind and welcome letter. I love to hear from and of those to whom God has been pleased to own my poor ministry. O that it may be made more abundantly fruitful!

And now I commend you all to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up on your most holy faith, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified through faith that is in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXIX.

Tunbridge Wells, May 20, 1870.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ, assembling at Staining Lane Chapel for the worship of God,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Though absent in body, I am with you in spirit, and I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, lest by any means the enemy should gain an advantage over you. I would say to you all, and that most affectionately in the Lord, Beware of those who by preaching or writing would lead you to depend upon a dead faith, resting upon the mere letter of the Word of God, unapplied to the heart and conscience by His Spirit. Such will advocate a religion without feeling.

Now, ‘To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’

When Adam had sinned against his Maker, and heard His voice calling to him in the garden, was it not a sense of guilt and shame that caused him to hide himself? Did he not *feel*? What are all the fears of the saints recorded in the Word of God, but feelings? The Saviour Himself, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. Did He not feel? A feeling Head and unfeeling members can never accord. What is hungering, thirsting, desiring, longing, and sorrowing, but feeling? If we

hunger and thirst after righteousness, we feel that hunger and thirst.

To know that all men are sinners, according to Scripture, is one thing, but for Paul to say, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;' and again, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' is another thing. I think there is something like feeling in all this.

Again: When a poor sinner is drawn to Christ by the Father's love, that love is not only believed, but it is also felt. When the burden of guilt and sin is removed from the conscience by the precious blood of sprinkling, surely something is felt. The Saviour says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Such rest is not a mere notion, but it is felt. We that believe do enter into rest. We rest from legal labour, in a full, free, and perfect salvation. And is there no feeling in all this?

To you that believe, Christ is precious. This is not matter of opinion or of sentiment, drawn simply from the testimony of the Word of God, but it is known by inward feeling. When the Bridegroom is withdrawn, the children of the bridechamber do fast; but when they enjoy His endearing presence, they have a feast of fat things.

We are charged by some with making a saviour of our frames and feelings. But such persons know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. A religion that is not attended with feeling, will never save a sinner. Are not sorrow and joy, fear and hope,

fasting and feasting, walking in darkness and in the light, bondage and liberty, distance and freedom at a throne of grace—are not all these, and indeed everything else connected with real religion, known by feeling? I say they are. In a word, religion without feeling is a fatal mistake, and of this I am quite sure. The Word of God confirms this truth in every sacred line.

O, my dear friends, may you and I be continually feeling more and more for this blessed power in which the kingdom of God stands!

You shall hear from me again before I return, if the Lord permit. Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

P.S.—Let me add, that if there is spiritual life in any soul, there must be both feeling and motion. To be without feeling indicates the state of death. We cannot live without feeling more or less; and this all of you know, who have been quickened unto life.

LXXX.

Tunbridge Wells, May 27, 1870.

My dear Friend and Brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with all them that are the true circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. ‘The true circumcision’—that is, those who are blessed with an internal religion. Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, not yet being circumcised. He had

the substance first, that is, faith in his heart. This was followed by the outward sign, as it always must be with those who have a true and living faith in their hearts ; which faith is fruitful : for ' faith without works is dead.'

Secondly, he was circumcised in heart ; as it is written : ' The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live ;' which shows that God's love, or the love of God, is in their hearts. These worship God in the spirit : their religion is internal and secret ; it comes not with observation ; it brings forth fruit. Yet is it unknown to the world. It lies in secret communion between God and the soul.

They rejoice in Christ Jesus ; and indeed God's people are usually brought to such a state that they have nothing but Christ to rejoice in. They cannot rejoice in themselves, for what do they see and feel in themselves ? Surely evil, only evil, and that continually. The truth is, that the stream of human joy was poisoned at the fountain, when Adam fell. Hypocrites may rejoice for a season, stony-ground hearers may receive the word with joy ; but if the oil of Divine grace is wanting, the lamp of profession will be extinguished at last. To rejoice in Christ Jesus implies that we must first *be* in Him : ' If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' His people are in Him, and He in them, by spiritual union. Such, and such only, have solid ground for rejoicing in Him—in His Person, as He is God and man ; in His precious blood, which removes the guilt of sin ; in His spotless

righteousness, which justifies them in the sight of a holy God—in Him, as He is all theirs, and they are His ; not their own, but His.

These joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also, as says the Apostle, they receive the atonement. The Church expresses it thus by Isaiah : ‘ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.’ And Paul says : ‘ Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.’

But, say you, is it all joy with the Lord’s people ?—James says : ‘ My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.’ It is very blessed when we are enabled, through grace, to count those things which are not as though they were. Paul expresses it thus : ‘ As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.’ But this is one of the secrets of real religion. A natural man can never receive it, nor can he understand it.

There is one thing more. Those who are the true circumcision have no confidence in the flesh : not in outward signs, but in internal grace. A man who is truly taught of God, loses all confidence in himself. He cannot trust in his own heart, because he finds it to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. His fleshly wisdom is turned into foolishness, his imaginary strength into weakness ; all his

self-righteousness is as filthy rags ; in a word, the whole of his natural and acquired religion is nothing worth. Paul, who went as far as any man in Pharisaic zeal, in legal works, and in religious attainments, says : ‘ What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; ’ ‘ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’

Union to Christ is always attended with a separation from self, from sin, and from the world. Yet these enemies will never cease to distress the regenerated child of God, until death puts an end to the conflict ; but, blessed be God ! we shall be more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us, nor shall our perfect weakness be any hindrance to this.

I trust, if the Lord permit, to be with my dear friends at Staining Lane on Sunday, June 5th. I much need their prayers. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXI.

31, *Cambridge Terrace*, July 15, 1870.

My dear Friend,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, and with the little flock at Staining Lane.

Though the poor under-shepherd is laid aside, he trusts that the Chief Shepherd will condescend Himself to feed the flock, so that the poor of the flock that wait upon Him may still know that it ~~is~~ word of the Lord, by the power that attends

it, by the life it communicates, by the food it administers : in a word, that His voice, which quickens dead sinners, may be heard speaking to the hearts of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and saying unto them that their sins are forgiven for His name's sake.

After my Friend left us this afternoon, I remembered that he said something about *a letter* ; but I thought, Where is the letter to come from, if the well-spring of life does not rise within ? when the following words were brought to my mind : 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.'

Here is a precept and an example for all who desire to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

Who and what is the Church ? It is that general assembly of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, even in the Lamb's book of life. It is a wonderful multitude that no man can number, all united in one body ; and yet each distinct member of that one body has personal union to, and interest in, the one glorious Head.

But how did Christ love His Church ? By choosing her to be His own, in such a sense that the choice can never be reversed : for, 'having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.' By taking her nature into union with His own Divine Person, thus becoming all that she is, that He might make her like Himself. She is a sinner ; and He was made sin for her, who knew no sin. She was subject to death, and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The same love that brought Him from heaven to

earth, shall bring His whole Church from earth to heaven. Polluted by sin, He saves her with the washing of water by the word, that He may present her to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a wonderful mystery, that such poor, sinful, polluted worms of the earth as we are, should ever be made righteous even as He is righteous, holy as He is holy, pure as He is pure! And yet it must be so. The love of this wonderful Bridegroom will have it so, nor will He be satisfied until He has gathered all whom He has thus loved with an everlasting love, who were given to Him by His Father, for whom He laid down His life, who are drawn to Him, and made accepted in Him, unto Himself, in the state of grace here, and of eternal glory hereafter.

Christ so loves His Church, as to desire her company: hence she says, 'I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me.' Depend upon it, there is not much love where persons do not care for each other's society. Christ set His love upon all the members of His Church from everlasting; hence He says: 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.' Indeed, the whole work of Christ, His incarnation, public ministry, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, was that He might bring poor sinners to love Him; not that *He* might love *them*, for this He does from all eternity, through time, and to all eternity.

Furthermore, the whole work of grace, wrought in the heart of a poor sinner by the Triune Jehovah,

Father, Son, and Spirit, is all done for the accomplishment of the same blessed end—that lost, ruined, undone, miserable sinners may be brought to love Him, trust in Him, and depend upon Him for all things pertaining to life and godliness, for all needful grace here, and eternal glory hereafter.

What I want you, my dear friends, especially to mark, is this, that our Maker, who is our Husband, the Lord of hosts is His name, though He rests in His love to poor sinners, yet must and will have the love of sinners to Himself. He says, ‘My son, give me thine heart;’ and as He knows how dead, how cold, how obstinate, how rebellious, and how perverse we all are, He promises, ‘I will circumcise their heart, and the heart of their seed, to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, that they may live.’ He is such a Husband, that He will have love on both sides. Himself is the fountain of this love; and He has wisdom, power, and love sufficient to put it into hearts where nothing but enmity against Himself reigned before. It is not forced love, but constrained love. And this I believe, that every one of us who have been favoured to know and believe the love that God hath to us, will freely acknowledge, to the honour of His name, that we should never have loved Him, if He had not first loved us.

Oh! how the Saviour delights to communicate His love to poor, needy sinners; and what pleasure and delight they have in communion and fellowship with Him! Depend upon it, my dear friends, there is nothing in this world that can equal it; and it is

our blessed privilege to aim at, and seek after it. It is the bond of perfectness. Nothing so purifies the heart as faith in the Saviour's love. It turns out all intruders, leads us to hate sin, to loathe self, and makes us watchful against everything calculated to offend our best Friend, and to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. May He put it into your hearts to pray for yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

P. S.—There is one thing more. The Saviour, as a Husband, loves poor sinners so as never to be ashamed of them, of what they are, or of what they may have been. But He makes them to be thoroughly ashamed of themselves, whilst they delight and glory in Him, and in the very near and dear relation in which He stands to them.

LXXXII.

Sevenoaks, July 22, 1870.

To the remnant yet remaining at Staining Lane, their servant and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ, wishes grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have been led by the hand of a gracious God to this place, where we arrived in safety last evening. As to the will of God concerning my future, I have ~~no~~ ~~no~~ certain assurance. Of one thing I am certain,

—that He will fulfil His word, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

I have been thinking this morning that I never knew any dear child of God who was not called to suffer affliction. Indeed it cannot be otherwise ; for if we were without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, we should be bastards, and not sons. We could not really know Christ, nor the power of His resurrection, nor the fellowship of His sufferings, nor could we be made conformable unto His death ; and it is certain we could never get to heaven, for it is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God.

But it may be objected that all the human family suffer affliction more or less ; that man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward ; that one event happeneth to the righteous and to the wicked, that there is no difference, and it is appointed to all men once to die, and after death the judgment. This is true ; nevertheless there certainly is a difference between the true church of God and the world at large. And this difference exists in everything that concerns the two seeds, the children of God and the children of the wicked one. For though all may suffer the same kind of afflictions, the difference lies in the following particulars:—

1. All kinds of affliction, originally considered, are the effect of man's sin, for 'sin entered into the world, and death by sin.' They proceed from God's wrath, and are a part of the curse. But as it respects those who have an interest in Christ, though

they may exceed the world in suffering, yet the curse is removed, both from their persons and their sufferings. There is no wrath, no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus. They may, and often do, experience a Father's displeasure, but there is no vindictive wrath: 'I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.'

2. There is a difference as to the effects produced by afflictions. Carnal persons often bear trouble with an astonishing degree of quietness and fortitude. The hypocrites in heart cry not when He bindeth them. The wicked have no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They despise the chastening of the Lord; that is, they rise above it, in carnal confidence. But when God chastens His children for their profit, it is that they may be partakers of His holiness. He is as a refiner and purifier of silver: and when He puts them into the furnace of affliction, it is that their dross and tin may be discovered and separated. In this process of refining, the dross comes to the surface, while the pure metal sinks to the bottom. By *the dross* is meant the corruption of our poor depraved nature, as murmuring, fretfulness, rebellion, discontent, impatience, anger, and especially unbelief; so that the poor vessel of mercy in the midst of the furnace is astonished and surprised at what is going on, and is too often ready to conclude that *all* is dross, and that there is no good thing in him.

But, as the fire of affliction discovers all this, the fire of everlasting love shall sooner or later consume and burn it all up, when the Lord shall have washed

away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. And if those who are thus brought through the fire are continued in the time-state, there will be a rich result produced ; for the trying of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. But if they go to heaven in a chariot of fire, as Elijah, or the martyrs, all the blessed effects of their purging here shall be manifested in eternal glory, when they shall see their ever-blessed Saviour, and be made like Him.

May we be enabled to bear one another's burdens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ ; to seek the welfare of Zion in her time of trouble and affliction, and to pray one for another.

The Lord's hand seems to be stretched out to chasten the nations. I look upon the war that has broken out, as a very sore dispensation from the Almighty : and though the nations of the world, the kingdom of the beast, are full of darkness, and have by their sins and provocations called for these sore judgments, yet Zion is deep, very deep, in the revolt. We, my dear friends, have had our share in causing the Holy One of Israel to lift up His hand in a way of judgment and chastisement. May we all be humbled before Him, that He may lift us up in due time ; casting all our cares upon Him, for He careth for us. If He is graciously pleased to pour the Spirit of supplication into our hearts,

what wonders may not be wrought, in answer to the prayer of faith!

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXIII.

Sevenoaks, July 29, 1870.

My dear Friends,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Our God has graciously given all His most holy Word to be the portion of His people. The Psalmist says: ‘Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.’ So that all God’s Word is ours. But when the holy and ever-blessed Spirit is pleased to take any portion of that Word, put it into the hand of our faith, and apply it with Divine power to our heart, it becomes ours in a more especial sense. He takes of the things that are Christ’s, and reveals them unto us.

While I was musing this morning before rising, the following words did, as it were, sound in my heart: ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.’

First, Here is a day of trouble spoken of. Second, An exhortation and encouragement concerning it. Third, A promise. Fourth, The fruit and effect of this promise.

1. As to the day of trouble. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. There is the day of Jacob’s trouble, mentioned in Jer. xxx. ‘Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it.’ Taking the

context, I believe this describes the state of a poor sinner who is at uncertainty about his deliverance, about his being born again.

There are heart-troubles, as the Psalmist speaks : 'The troubles of my heart are enlarged.' These arise either from a sight and sense of the evils of one's own heart, or they are the heart-felt troubles and afflictions of all kinds, which God sends to try His people.

Another day of trouble is when the soul seeks after God, and cannot find Him ; as Job : 'O that I knew where I might find Him !' or Mary Magdalene, who said : 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.' Or seasons of much spiritual barrenness are meant ; as our Lord says : 'The days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.'

2. There is the exhortation and encouragement, 'Call upon me ;' in the present day of trouble, in every day of trouble, whatever it may arise from. Calling, crying, implies that the Lord does not seem to be very near to us ; and yet, bless His precious name ! He is always near enough to hear and answer us. There is nothing in which I feel I am more deficient than in this *calling*. It does not intend a long set form of prayer, but a single cry, a broken sentence, as it were, drawn from the heart by a sight and sense of need. I think we procure many of our trials to ourselves, by that backwardness to call upon His name, to which we are so prone. The Lord loves to hear His children cry unto Him : 'Let me

see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.' And when love does not draw us to Him, afflictions are sometimes sent, and sanctified, to increase our earnestness in seeking His face. But whether drawn or driven, it will always be found profitable in the end, to seek the Lord and to call upon His name.

3. There is the promise: 'I will deliver thee.' This is often found to be the hardest thing in the world—to believe that He *will* deliver us, especially when we cry and shout, and He shutteth out our prayer; when, like Job, we seek Him, and cannot find Him. Under such circumstances, we generally get into a legal spirit. There is often a very deep sight and sense of our backslidings, and of the inconsistency of our life, walk, and conversation in many things. Self-examination discovers that we have abounding carnality, and little, very little, real spirituality. This, and much else that is like it, makes us thoroughly ashamed of ourselves; and then we frequently add sin to sin, by doubting God's faithfulness to His own promises, because of our unfaithfulness to Him. Thus we too often begin to think that He is changeable, like ourselves.

Now, all this is permitted, that we may be led to look to Him as a faithful, covenant-keeping, and promise-fulfilling God and Father. His everlasting love to His people, His eternal choice of them in Christ, all the work of Divine grace that is wrought in them, are the effects of His sovereign will and good pleasure. We did not merit His favour at first, and, bless His precious name! all our deficiencies, shortcomings, and imperfections shall never

move Him, concerning His love to our souls ; for, 'having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.' We may, indeed, procure to ourselves a Father's chastisement ; but nothing shall ever alter His love, or change His purpose. Therefore He will fulfil every promise He has made, whatever carnal reason, sin and self, unbelief, the world, or Satan, may say to the contrary. 'I am the Lord : I change *not* : therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' by any fire ye may be called to pass through.

4. 'Thou shalt glorify me.' This is either an exhortation or a promise. God is glorified, when we ascribe every deliverance to Him, and to Him alone, without any merit or worthiness on our part ; when we acknowledge Him in all our ways, confessing that it is His hand that supplies and directs whatever means may be employed in our behalf ; when an offering of praise is brought before Him : 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' And because He knows our deficiency in this matter, and that without Him we can do nothing, He says : 'Thou *shalt* glorify me ;' as elsewhere : 'I *will* be their God, and they *shall* be my people.' Thus our gracious God is pleased not only to engage His word for our deliverance, but also to secure to Himself His own glory. 'This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise.'

I hope I am better than when I left home. I desire to watch the Lord's hand concerning me in everything. I want to acquiesce in His holy will, whatever that will may be : and yet I must say that

if He is graciously pleased to raise me up again, I do desire to go forth again in His strength, making mention of His righteousness, and of His only. I trust that my dear friends are inclined and enabled to seek the Lord in my behalf. I can truly say that I do not forget them, and shall rejoice to meet them again, if the Lord is pleased to enable me ; but I must wait His time. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him. JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXIV.

Sevenoaks, August 5, 1870.

To my dear Friends whom I love in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever, grace, mercy, and peace. Amen.

Amidst the various changes and changing scenes, both inward and outward, which my gracious God and Father hath appointed for me, there is this blessed truth : ' The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.' My mind has been much exercised for the last day or two, with a great variety of thoughts ; too many of them unprofitable, and, I fear, dishonouring to my gracious God. Yet, notwithstanding all this, I have been favoured with some occasional meditations about faith and its trial, from what our Lord said to His disciples, that when the Comforter was come, He should reprove the world of sin, ' because,' said the Saviour, ' they believe not on me.'

Unbelief was the first sin in the world, and it produced all the others. It was through unbelief that Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. She questioned

the truth of what God had said. And this has continued ever since.

‘He shall reprove the world of sin, . . . because they believe not on me.’ By the entrance of the law into the conscience, is the knowledge of sin. The law of heathens in their natural conscience, and God’s law revealed in His most holy Word, both speak the same language under different forms ; and by the one and the other all men are declared to be sinners ; ‘for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’

Now, where there is no faith in Christ, the sinner is under the condemnation of a broken law, and therefore the Spirit convinces and reproves him of sin, because he believes not in Christ—first, of sin in general, for, ‘Whatsoever is not of faith is sin ;’ and secondly, of unbelief in particular : ‘He that believeth not is condemned already.’

But whenever the convinced sinner is, through grace, enabled to believe in Christ, he is no longer reprovèd for sin. Conscience may reprove him, Satan may accuse him, he may condemn himself, but God does not condemn him. As soon as David confessed his sin from a feeling discovery of it, the answer was, ‘The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.’ And this shall be the experience of every poor, needy, convinced sinner, who is enabled to make a full and free confession before God.

Faith’s warrant is God’s word. God hath said it. True faith is not simply the crediting of what is written in the Bible—this is done by many, who never knew the sin of unbelief—but it is the

receiving of God's word in the heart ; as it is said of Lydia : ' Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.' Poor sinners are brought to believe for themselves, not *because* they are cleansed, because they are justified, because they are sanctified, because they are joyful, and have happy frames and feelings ; but they are washed, but they are justified, but they are sanctified, but they are made happy in the Lord, *through* believing. Some persons seem to think that all these precious blessings are communicated first, and that faith follows because of them ; but this is a mistake. Faith comes first, and this precious grace is the gift of God. It is produced in the hearts of sinners by, and it stands in, the power of God. A faith resulting from a fancied, fleshly experience is not worth anything.

But, on the other hand, true faith always produces experience. It works by love, is accompanied with the fear of God, lays hold upon Christ, brings Him first into the thoughts of the heart, then its desires, its affections, and finally into itself : ' That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' And where the Saviour condescends to take up His abode, neither sin, nor self, nor the world, nor Satan, nor fear, nor unbelief, nor death, nor life, shall ever cause Him to depart. We may, and do often, mourn His absence : ' Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.' But He is sure to return again, as Himself says, ' I will see you again ;' and when He comes, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. His blood purges the conscience from the fresh accumulated

guilt of sin, His righteousness justifies freely, His love fills the heart, and His endearing presence brings the whole person near to Himself. We dwell in Him, and He in us.

Nor can sinners ever be delivered from the guilt of sin without faith in the atonement. We can never *forget* that we are sinners ; and it is by faith alone that we cast the burden of our sins where God Himself has laid it, even on the Person of His dear Son ; and it is only by renewed acts of faith upon the Saviour that the conscience is kept purged from dead works. Alas, alas ! our poor minds are ever wandering from God ; at least so *I* find it. I want to be brought and kept very near to Him who alone can make me happy in this world and in that to come.

But true faith must be tried ; and it often seems to me as if the trial of it would destroy it. But not so ; for Jesus saith : ' I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'

I have no certain assurance as to the Lord's purpose concerning myself. Sometimes I think that I shall be raised up again to speak in His dear name, and at others I have many fears about it. I want

'. . . . to lie passive in His hand,
And know no will but His.'

If any of you who have interest at court can help me by your petitions, I believe you will not be found wanting. For myself, I have constant remembrance of you in my prayers, desiring greatly to meet you, and to be instrumental in imparting some spiritual blessing.

May the good Lord have us all in His continual keeping. So prays yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXV.

Sevenoaks, August 12, 1870.

To all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and esteem His unworthy servant for the work's sake, grace and peace be multiplied, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

I thought I must send my dear friends another scrap, not only from the hope that some spiritual savour may be communicated to their souls, but that they may know my love to them in Christ Jesus, and my desire to live and die among them, if it be God's will.

While thinking one morning about the wonderful way in which my gracious God has been pleased to lead me both in grace and providence, the following words were dropped into my heart: 'I am the Lord; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' Yes, thought I, this is the true, the only reason why I have not been consumed. The words are contained in the Bible, and therefore we know they are true. 'I am Jehovah; I change not.'

God is unchangeable in His being, in His attributes, perfections, purposes, and designs.

He never changes in His justice. This is proved by His not sparing His dear Son from its stroke. As the Surety of His covenant family, He bore our sins—that is, the punishment of our sins—in His own body on the tree. He made His soul an offering for sin.

If any of the guilty might have been spared, surely it would have been the holy, harmless Lamb of God. But this could not be. Divine justice forbade it.

God is unchangeable in His love. His is an everlasting love. The covenant of His grace is ordered in all things and sure. He is of one mind, and none can turn Him. His gifts and calling are without repentance; and all His promises are in Christ Jesus yea and amen, to the glory of God by us.

And because He changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob never have been, and never shall be, consumed by the fire of Divine wrath, of temptation, of persecution, or any other fire; nor shall they ever be overwhelmed by the waters of affliction, sorrow, or distress; no, not even by death itself.

But some of us may sometimes be ready to say, Am I a son, or a daughter, of Jacob?—Certainly not according to the flesh; and if we were, it would be no benefit to us. Jacob was beloved of God; nor has He left *us* without tokens of His love. Jacob wrestled and prevailed with God, and obtained the name of Israel; and we Gentiles are to call ourselves by the name of Jacob and Israel (Is. xliv. 5; Gal. vi. 16). Our dear Lord Himself is called by many of the names recorded in the Old Testament. *Jacob* is one (Ps. xxiv. 6). All that are Christ's are the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and therefore we Gentiles, who have obtained mercy of the Lord, are sons and daughters of Jacob.

And we are not consumed, though, according to our feelings, carnal reason, and unbelief, we are continually meeting with circumstances which seem sufficient to

swallow us up altogether. But not so, because our Jehovah changes not.

When Adam and all his posterity came under the sentence of death pronounced by God's righteous law, the world was in mercy spared from the full execution of the sentence, for the elect's sake. When the whole of the antediluvian world was destroyed by the flood, Noah and his family were preserved; for Jehovah had promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and therefore it was impossible that all the human family should be destroyed. Lot was preserved alive, when Sodom and the neighbouring cities were consumed by fire. And why? Because Jehovah changes not. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob passed through many dangers and difficulties in safety, for God, who changes not, reproved kings for their sakes, saying: 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.'

To what imminent danger was Joseph exposed, when his brethren conspired against him, when he was sold into Egypt, and cast into prison. Yea, how remarkable was the preservation of Jacob and all his house, when the famine prevailed in all lands. They were supplied, while so many wanted food.

Again, how wonderfully were the children of Jacob preserved, notwithstanding the cruel decree of Pharaoh to destroy all their males. Moses is conspicuous among them. It was by faith that he, through the faithfulness of God, was kept alive. It was the unchangeable Jehovah that appeared to Moses in the bush, and thereby gave him a sign of the preservation of His people. The bush burned,

and was not consumed. This excited the attention and astonishment of Moses.

And have *we* not, my dear friends, been often constrained to admire and adore that wonderful wisdom, love, and power, by which we have been preserved both in soul and body by our unchangeable covenant God? Both time and memory would fail me to tell one half of the wonderful instances of God's preserving care and watchful eye over His and your unworthy servant. What encouragement is this still to trust Him, still to hope in His mercy! But, alas! we can neither believe nor hope, without a continual supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But this He has promised us; and I am sure we shall have it, because He has said, 'I am Jehovah; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

If the gates of hell, sin and death, shall never prevail against the church of the living God as a whole, nor against the glorious foundation on which it is built, neither shall they against the least of those living stones of which it is composed—against the least member of the mystical body of the Saviour. 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;' nor shall any adversary, whether inward or outward, ever deprive you of it.

And now, beloved, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in Him. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

P.S.—I must thank my dear friend and brother, Mr. H., for his kind letter; also my other friends who have sent kind messages to me and mine. May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush ever attend you all. I shall rejoice, if it is the Lord's will to enable me, to meet you again. All my times are in His hand. I know He *can* strengthen me for the work, if it pleases Him. I can only say, my dear friends, let those who are desirous of hearing the Lord's word through His unworthy instrument, continue to join with me in asking for this favour, for I do long to proclaim to poor sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing I more dread than being laid aside from His service. But I do want to be enabled to say in sincerity, 'Thy will be done.' Once more, may the blessing of a covenant God rest upon you. Amen.

LXXXVI.

Sevenoaks, August 18, 1870.

To my dear Friend and Brother, Mr. H., and to all those who love me for the work's sake, and who have been accustomed to hear the word of the gospel through my unworthy instrumentality. May grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all. Amen.

I wish to send you some of the thoughts which have occupied my mind in respect of my being thus separated from you. We know that all things are of God's appointment, and that there is a time for every work and for every purpose under the sun. Read carefully the 3rd chapter of Ecclesiastes. It is quite clear,

from the Word of God, that He worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will. That will respects first His own glory, and then the welfare of His covenant family ; for all things work together for good to them that love Him, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Now, I wish to remember all the way which the Lord my God hath led me in this wilderness. In doing this, I am constrained to acknowledge that it was He who brought me to know Him, in which saving knowledge is life eternal ; that it was He who was pleased to send me forth into His vineyard. And there was a set time for this. It was on the 28th of September, 1823. And He has been graciously pleased to supply me with matter for the ministry ever since ; and I can truly say that some of the happiest seasons I have ever known, have been experienced by me when engaged in my Master's work. I am quite sure that this has not been the result of what is commonly called chance, but it has been the working out of God's own purpose by Himself. What is applicable to me is no less so to you, my dear friends, every one of you. It was God who in His providence first brought you under the word, and every portion of meat that you have received in due season has been from His hand.

As it has pleased Him to lay me aside, I have been thinking that it may be profitable for each of you, as well as myself, humbly to seek, by prayer and supplication, that the Lord would be pleased to make known to us what is His particular voice in this dispensation. 'The Lord's voice crieth to the

city, and the man of wisdom shall see Thy name ; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' Its voice is love, all love ; in every dispensation nothing but love to His dear people. Nevertheless, it is sometimes in a way of reproof and rebuke ; sometimes it calls to self-examination, sometimes to watchfulness. It frequently discovers some unsuspected, unperceived evil ; either neglect of His great goodness, forgetfulness of Him, coldness, carelessness, indifference in His service, unbelief, or the allowing and indulging of the flesh in some sin whereby God is dishonoured, the Holy Spirit grieved, the conscience hardened, and the affections alienated from God, His worship, ways, and people.

You know, my dear friends, I have always pleaded for a personal, heartfelt, secret religion ; and I bless God, I know the value of it ; and therefore I recommend these things to your earnest and serious consideration.

I know that our safety does not result from our own watchfulness or diligence, but from the free, full, sovereign grace of God in Christ ; and it is this knowledge that produces a desire in our hearts to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Whilst we cannot look to, or expect, any good thing in ourselves, yet His grace is sufficient for us, and His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Without Him we can do nothing ; and all of us who are taught of God must say, with Paul, 'I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' As we have nothing of our own, and cannot of ourselves

perform any good thing, O it is our blessed privilege to be earnestly, constantly, and fervently crying to Him who is Himself sufficient for all that we need !

I assure you, my dear friends, that I have continual remembrance of you in my prayers to God. I cannot forget you. I am taught of God to love you for His sake. I know that the truths which I have been enabled to proclaim among you are according to the will and Word of God, and that they shall stand, when all the lies of Satan and inventions of men must come to nought. Therefore, as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so may we walk in Him. You know that some are so high in doctrinal notions, as to think very little of internal experience or of external fruits ; and others are so chained down to the meditation of self, through unbelief, that they can seldom receive any comfort from the exceeding great and precious promises of God. These are kept under the law, looking to Moses and Sinai, not to Christ and Zion. May the Lord in mercy deliver all His dear children from this state of legal bondage, and bring them into that gospel liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

I know, both by the Word and my own experience, that those who fear God have many changes. They go in, and find pasture ; and out, to get an appetite. They sometimes walk in darkness, and then again shine in the Saviour's light, burn in His love, and are strong in the grace that is in Him. These changes you must expect ; but our gracious God changeth not. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

May you and I be enabled to mingle our petitions to the God of all grace, that we may soon meet again in His earthly courts, and be favoured with His presence, for there can be no blessing without Him. —Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXVII.

Sevenoaks, August 26, 1870.

To my dear Brethren and Companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ, grace and peace be multiplied. Amen.

I cannot help thinking much of that terrible conflict which is now raging between France and Germany. I shall not attempt to investigate which country is most to blame—this would be to look at second causes. I wish rather to trace all to the first great Cause. God says: ‘Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?’ The sword, pestilence, famine, and the teeth of beasts, are God’s fourfold judgments by which He punishes the world for its sin.

Who can think of the sufferings of those engaged in war, the wounded and dying, without sorrow of heart? How greatly mistaken many professors have been, who have supposed that there would be no more war. It has been thought by many that the great profession of the present day, science, philosophy, and enlargement of intellect, had so improved man’s nature, that discord among nations would never take place again. It has been thought that human nature was so much elevated, that men

could never again destroy one another as heretofore. Many have been looking for a fancied millennium ; but alas, alas ! such are unacquainted with the nature of evil ; as every person must be, who has never felt the plague of his own heart.

James says : ‘ From whence come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ? ’

When the Judge of all the earth passed His righteous sentence upon Satan, that old serpent, He said : ‘ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.’ Satan’s seed is, first, that principle of indwelling sin, which, whether known or unknown, is in every son and daughter of Adam. Paul calls it a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. This, my dear friends, often causes you and me, who are in this tabernacle, to groan, being burdened.

Secondly, the seed of Satan is unregenerate persons, who are left dead in trespasses and sins. Hence the Saviour said to the Jews : ‘ Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.’ And to the self-righteous Pharisees : ‘ Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? ’ In respect of these our Lord declares : ‘ I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ Such is the enmity of the human heart, that men can never be truly reconciled to each other, until they are reconciled to God by the death of His dear Son, who hath made peace for us by the blood of His cross. This precious blood, revealed to faith, and applied to

the conscience by the operation of the Spirit, purges from the guilt of sin. Having much forgiven, they love much, and are taught of God to love one another

War, my dear friends, is not only an effect of God's righteous judgment, but it is a sore calamity, with which He visits sinful nations. When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God dispossessed them of the land of Canaan, that He might make room for His own people. And when the Jews, through unbelief, rejected the Saviour and His gospel, their house was left unto them desolate.

Of the four great monarchies represented to Nebuchadnezzar in vision (Dan. ii), and to Daniel (ch. vii, viii), three destroyed each other in succession, and the fourth must by-and-bye be destroyed by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Since the fall of the Pagan Roman Empire, the ten kingdoms into which it was divided are represented by the ten toes of the image shown to the king.

It is quite clear from the Word of God that He sets up one kingdom, and puts down another, according to His own sovereign will. It is said of Israel, that He gave them a king (Saul) in His anger, and took him away in His wrath. He afterwards appointed David to be the ruler, from whom the Messiah was to spring, according to the flesh, of whom He says: 'My covenant shall stand fast with Him.' Yes, Jesus must reign, till He hath put down all rule and all authority and power, yea, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.'



I want Him to reign, my dear friends, in my understanding, as the light of life ; in my will, by His almighty power, producing submission to the will of God ; in my conscience, by His atoning blood, purging it from dead works, and keeping it clean ; in my thoughts, as the chief subject of meditation ; in my desires and affections, as my All and in all, as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, as the source and substance of all my peace, comfort, enjoyment, and happiness. I covet all this, but I cannot attain to it. But, 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

I do hope that the Lord will be pleased in mercy to preserve this our poor sinful country from the calamity of war. I often tremble when I think of the evil that I find in myself ; and of the sin, hypocrisy, blasphemy, immorality, and rebellion, that seem ready, like a mighty flood, to deluge the whole land ; and, what is still worse, Zion is deep in the revolt. What God said of His ancient people, is but too applicable to ourselves : 'My people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' A meek, gentle, humble, broken spirit, a contrite heart, chaste affections, spiritual desires, a keen appetite for the bread of life, a separating between the precious and the vile both within and without, and a life, walk, and conversation according to the gospel, these, I fear, are but rarely met with in

our day. And yet, blessed be God! there is hope in Israel notwithstanding all this; for Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God. Yes, there are still some who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the land. You know God said to Abraham, that if He found but ten righteous persons in Sodom, He would not destroy it for their sakes.

During the long French war, Britain and her dependencies were miraculously preserved by the protecting hand of our gracious God: and though I fear that real godliness is at the present time very much diminished, yet the Saviour's love, whether it embraces few or many, is always the same. He will take as much care of one, two, or three, who love and fear His name, as He does of a multitude. It is nothing with Him to save whether by many or by few. A handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse is sufficient, if He is pleased to make it so.

It is Himself, my dear friends, Himself, who is, and must be our All and in all. Human reason, sense, and unbelief can never receive this, yet it is no less true. He says: 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Now, whether our faith appears strong or weak, He, the faithful God, is always the same. He will not, He cannot, deny Himself.

If the Lord permit, I shall hope to meet my dear friends once more at Staining Lane, on Lord's Day morning. May the good Lord condescend to favour us all with His Spirit of supplication, that we



may wrestle hard with Him for His presence, support, and blessing: that He will be with us indeed, and afford strength and ability to His poor weak instrument, and that He will bless His own word to those who hear, that he that sows and they that reap may rejoice together.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXVIII.

Cambridge Terrace, South Lambeth,

Sunday Morning, Dec. 25, 1870.

My beloved Hearers,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you. Amen.

I had fully hoped to be at Staining Lane this morning, but my gracious God has been pleased to appoint otherwise. My complaint became worse last evening, and I am unable to rise this morning.

I have been meditating on Proverbs xvii. 17, ‘A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.’ My desire was to tell you that this friend and brother is our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. He is indeed the Friend of sinners. He commended His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners He died for us. He loved us when we were in a state of enmity against Him, when we were dead in trespasses and sins. But He hath made us His friends, by reconciling us to Himself; and He hath truly said, ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ And, ‘Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.’

If He has made us His friends indeed, we must know something about the following particulars :

1. We must be reconciled to His whole method of salvation.

2. We must have the fear of God in our hearts ; for 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.' And He says: 'All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.'

3. To do whatsoever He hath commanded us, is, (1) To have a true and living faith in Him. (2) To love Him because He hath first loved us. (3) To be taught of Him to love one another.

4. This blessed friendship is manifested by communion and fellowship with Him, by delighting in Him, and by walking with Him ; as it is said of Abraham, that he believed, and was called the Friend of God.

The Saviour became our Brother, by taking the children's flesh and blood into union with His own Divine Person, and by giving us of His Spirit. At the time of His agony, the Saviour, addressing the Father, said: 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' Elsewhere, 'Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.' He was *born* for adversity ; and all that are His must drink of His cup. But if we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together. I want, with the Apostle, to be able to 'reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.'

And what shall I say to you more, my dear friends,

but still beg that if the Lord is pleased to enable you, I may have an interest in your prayers, that if it is His gracious will, I may come amongst you again, in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Though now absent in body, I shall still be present with you in spirit.

May the condescending Friend and Brother of poor sinners, of whom I had desired to speak to you this morning, be pleased to bless you.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

LXXXIX.

Cambridge Terrace, December 31, 1870.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,—I had hoped to meet you to-morrow, being New Year's Day, in the Lord's house, but my gracious God and Father has appointed otherwise. I am in bed, feeling ill.

Five thousand eight hundred and seventy-four years have passed away since this world was first called into being; but, blessed be God! He has made a new covenant with, and for, His dear people, which shall never pass away. It is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation, and all my desire. By this covenant of Father, Son, and Spirit, Jehovah has undertaken to be the God of His people, and none can alter it. He has also promised to put His fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from Him, so that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

There are many ways of departing from God.
1. Through unbelief: 'Take heed, lest there be in

any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' 2. By growing cold in heart and affection to Him, and in desires after Him. 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' 3. By all kinds of outward sin, into which a corrupt nature and a tempting devil are ever ready to lead us. But by this new, this everlasting covenant, Jehovah has provided against all these, by promising to put His fear into our hearts, so that we shall not depart from Him.

The covenant that God made with Adam was conditional, and soon broken. Paradise was for ever lost. The covenant that God made with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai was conditional, soon broken, and the land of Canaan forfeited. And thus everything temporal waxes old, and is ready to vanish away. One generation passeth away, and another cometh. And so will it be to the end of all things. But, blessed be God! ours is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that passeth not away, reserved in heaven for all who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

If it be the Lord's gracious will, my dear friends, I shall rejoice to meet you again in His sanctuary; but whatever He hath appointed, I beg for submission to His holy will. *Beg*, I must say, because I sometimes feel submission, and then I lose it again. But, blessed be God! though I am subject to many changes, yet He changes not. 'I am the Lord; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

I must conclude with earnestly desiring a con-

tinued interest in your prayers, if you are led to the throne of grace for me. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

P. S.—I would have sent you more, but I feel very weak.

XC.

Cambridge Terrace, January 6, 1871.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,—As I know not what may be the will of my ever-gracious God and Father concerning my present sickness, whether it may be long or short, whether He will condescend to glorify His grace by raising me up again to proclaim what He has done for my soul, or whether He will take me home to Himself, to be for ever with Him, my thoughts are frequently employed about the ground of my hope ; for if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?

Now, I might say something to you, my dear friends, about the glorious fundamental doctrines of the everlasting gospel—for those professors who do not embrace these, can have no scriptural ground to build their hope upon—but I must forbear. Many indeed receive the truth notionally, who will never enter the kingdom of heaven ; but all who embrace the truth experimentally, shall find that the truth shall make them free. And if the Son shall make them free, they shall be free indeed.

The coming of a poor sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ is the all-important matter ; for He says, ‘ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ We find that there are some who will come to Him in

the last day, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us;' to whom He will say, 'Depart from me; I never knew you:' by which it appears that there is a twofold coming to Christ; and I want to be continually assured that I come to Him rightly.

When the Lord was pleased to call me out from this profane world, from the Unitarians, the Arminians, from my own natural friends and relations, and from my own sinful self—for there must be a putting off of self, if we ever put on the Lord Jesus Christ—it was the Saviour who first came to me, and sought me out, or I should never have sought after Him. He says, 'I will both search my sheep, and seek them out.'

But, it may be replied, does not the Saviour call sinners to come to Him?—Yes, bless His precious name! He certainly does; but they never obey that call until He condescends to visit them. His own word spoken by another, without Himself, leaves the sinner in his natural state; but when the word reaches and quickens the soul, the Saviour Himself comes in it, with it, and by it. Such a soul now hears the Saviour's voice; and this it is that communicates life, and is the foundation of all spiritual obedience. And thus you see that when poor sinners come to Christ as a Saviour, they come *as* sinners, empty, bare, poor, needy, yea, totally destitute. They have nothing, and are nothing, but sin.

Now, my dear friends, to this day I am in no better condition, as in and of myself, than I was the first day when He brought me to seek His face. You ———, if the Lord is graciously pleased to bless

the reading of His Word to your souls, that all who have made a profession of coming to Christ while left in a state of nature, are distinguished from those whom He condescends to draw to Himself, by their always bringing something with them to recommend them, or in some way to procure His favour. Adam and Eve at first appeared in their fig-leaf aprons. When Balaam wanted Divine information, he sought to enchantments. When Saul could not get any answer from God, he went to the witch of Endor. Judas confessed his sin to the chief priests. And the foolish virgins, when they found that they had no oil, were persuaded to go to those who professed to sell it. Thus it has been Satan's work in all ages to keep poor sinners at a distance from the Saviour, by filling their hearts and heads with notions about their own fitness, suitableness, and the like, to come to Him. One is too great a sinner to come ; *he* can never expect to find mercy ; though the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Another has never felt, seen, and known enough of the evil of sin ; he has never sunk low enough under the sentence of the law, and therefore it is of no use for *him* to come ; though conscience bears witness that he feels himself a sinner in everything he says and does. To another it is represented that he has not enough spiritual life, faith, hope, or love to come to Christ with ; and that *he* will be turned back, until his condition is improved, until he becomes more earnest, more diligent, more like the children of God ; whereas it is God alone who can make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

A legal conscience is never satisfied with that which has rendered full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, namely, the precious atoning blood and spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is continually calling for some addition to these. The sinner must grow better, he must improve his condition in some way or other : and thus this inward striving between flesh and spirit, between faith and unbelief, between light and darkness, between life and death, goes on, until the Lord is graciously pleased to remove every refuge of lies, and to make the lost, ruined, undone sinner not only poor and needy in spirit, but perfectly destitute of all that is good. It is in this condition that the Lord brings all His dear people to seek His face. To this we must be brought, and in this we shall continue, and be kept, if, like Enoch and Noah, we are favoured to walk with God.

I am sure that the grand, the great secret of real religion, that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him, consists in this—that I am nothing, while the Lord is all and in all. And this, my dear brethren, must be applied to every branch of Bible theology, whether historical, prophetic, doctrinal, experimental, or practical. Yes, Christ is all in everything, and the sinner is nothing.

If any of my dear friends should object to the matter contained in this scrap, let them bring their objections to Him who is the Wonderful Counsellor ; and I am fully persuaded that if they are enabled to listen to His voice, they will be all removed.

Dearly beloved, may you and I seek more and

more to be nothing, that Christ may be all and in all.

I am still confined to my room, almost to my bed. Brethren, pray for me.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,
JOHN HOBBS.

P.S.—Do not forget that the sinner *merits* nothing by coming to Christ.

XCI.

Cambridge Terrace, January 13, 1871.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all. Amen. Feeling desirous, as I do, of uniting with you in spirit when you assemble on Lord's Day, I send you a few lines, that you may know the care and love that I have for you.

I have been suffering much through the whole of this day, and I need not tell you that no chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous. May it yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness in your unworthy friend. The seed must be first sown, before the fruit can be brought forth.

Yesterday morning my mind was sweetly occupied in meditating on the blessed privilege of communion with the Father and with His dearly beloved Son. Such seasons are very precious, but they are usually of short duration. After His resurrection, the Saviour did but manifest Himself to His disciples, and soon vanished out of their sight. And so I find it. Seasons of communion are frequently very short, yet always sweet; but the days of darkness are many.

He who is the Sun of righteousness always shines forth with healing in His wings, whatever clouds of darkness may intervene between Himself and us. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever ; and all the clouds, whether of darkness, of transgression, of unbelief, or of mortality itself, must soon pass away. Mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

But watching at Wisdom's gates, waiting at the posts of her doors, fighting the good fight of faith, striving to enter in at the strait gate, following hard after Him in whom our souls delight, maintaining a constant warfare against self, the flesh, and Satan, seems at times to be very hard for those who are without strength, without wisdom, and without any ability of their own. And yet, blessed be God ! not too hard for Him who has said : ' My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'

I sometimes feel as if I could not bear up any longer under that daily cross which my gracious God has appointed for me. Faint I should, and faint I must, were He not my support ; but He says : ' The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' May He enable me to honour Him by believing this. But, if I believe not, He abideth faithful ; He cannot deny Himself. Not my faith, but His faithfulness, is my stay and support. I want, like Abraham, in hope to believe against hope. I want, do I say ? I do not mean that I am altogether destitute of this hoping and believing ; but there is a secret con-

nected with this internal, this spiritual living upon Christ. We feel that we want that with which we are already blessed in some small measure. He that lives, wants more life; he that sees, more light; he that hopes, wants the abounding of hope through the power of the Holy Ghost; he that believes, wants to be strong in faith, giving glory to God; and he that loves the Saviour, wants to love Him more.

If I increase in anything, it is in wants, in necessities: 'As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' The more we are led into an experience of this hidden life, the greater riddle it seems—'As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' Paul found it to be thus; and so do I, in my small measure. I wish all the Lord's dear people, wheresoever they are, may be brought to walk in the same path.

Why, say you, this is not very kind, for you are always complaining about something.—So I am, more or less, always complaining about my sinful self; and yet I am so sure that these things are found in the narrow way in which God calls all His dear family to walk, that I do earnestly wish they may all realize them for themselves; for

'Though painful at present, they'll cease before long;
And then, O how pleasant the conqueror's song!'

For if we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together.

I have 'no certainty as to the Lord's gracious appointment concerning myself. Sometimes it seems impossible to me that I should ever have strength

again for His work ; and then, I remember that I go in the strength of *the Lord God*, and therefore it is His strength, and not mine. What I seem most to want, is entire submission to His holy will. This He must give me, if I ever fully realize it. To you, my dear friends, I can only repeat what Paul says, 'Brethren, pray for us.'

And now, may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless you with His presence, while you are assembled in His name, and lead, guide, and direct you in all things. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCII.

Cambridge Terrace, January 20, 1871.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ, assembling together to seek our Lord Jesus Christ at Staining Lane,—I once more address you in His name : I bless you in the name of the Lord. For this I have a Divine warrant. Wisdom says : 'Blessed is the man that heareth me.' To hear the voice of Wisdom is to have the ear opened to discipline. This can be done only by almighty power. While in a state of nature, man's ear and heart are closed to the joyful sound ; nor will he, nor can he, hear the voice of charmers, charm they never so wisely. Our Lord says : 'My sheep hear my voice ;' and His voice is powerful. It is a quickening voice ; faith in the heart comes by it ; and blessed is every one that heareth it experimentally for himself. 'Blessed is

the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,' as you *do*.

These doors and gates are the gates of Zion; and God speaks thus to every sent servant of His: 'Go through, go through the gates.' We all know the general use of doors and gates. They are to admit persons to that which is beyond them, and to keep out all intruders. Now, when God's servants are commanded to go through these gates, it implies that they all have an experimental knowledge of their mystical meaning. The first of them is the gate of life, by which every sent servant of God must enter into the sheepfold; and when he describes, in preaching, what he knows about this Divine life, he goes through this first gate before the people; and when the word is attended with Divine power, others follow him from a state of death to spiritual life.

The second is the door of hope; and to preach Christ experimentally to poor sinners, is to go through this gate or door. Christ is the only hope which God hath set before us in the gospel; and when the word is attended with Divine power, so that despairing souls are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, they pass from a state of despondency to a measure of hope, which is very comforting to a poor broken-hearted sinner. Thus, both minister and people go together through this door of hope.

The third is the gate of righteousness. 'Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: this gate of the Lord

into which the righteous shall enter.' To preach the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and wherein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, is to go through these gates of righteousness. And thus, both minister and people pass from a state of condemnation through sin, to a state of perfect righteousness and justification by Christ. Faith comes by hearing; and to believe aright is to do the work of God. It is written: 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city;' that is, the church of the living God, Zion, the city of the great King.

The next gate is praise. 'Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.' To be delivered from the guilt of sin, and to have the heart set free from the love of it, will fill the mouth with the high praises of God; as it is written: 'O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.' To preach all this experimentally, is to go through the gates; and to proclaim Christ as the only way of life, and the pathway in which there is no death, is to cast up the highway for God's people. To take up the stumblingblocks out of their way, is to detect and discover the various hindrances, obstacles, and impediments, both within and without, which they meet with in their path.

I must now conclude, as my cough prevents me from dictating any more. Brethren, pray for me, ~~that~~ I may be restored to you again, if it be the

Lord's will, and that faith and patience may hold out to the end. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCIII.

Cambridge Terrace, January 27, 1871.

To my dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ, continuing to assemble in the place where our dear Lord and Saviour has so often condescended to meet with us and to commune with us.—May grace, mercy, and peace abide with you for ever. Amen.

If I should be enabled to fill this paper, I think I may venture to say it must be with new matter; for the poor earthen vessel seems quite dry and empty, as though I had nothing to say. I wait for the well-spring of life to spring up within, and would say with Israel of old, 'Spring up, O well! sing ye unto it.'

In the scraps that I sent you last week, there was something written about Wisdom's voice, which says: 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,' connected with what is spoken in Isaiah about going through these gates. First there is hearing the Saviour's voice, then watching and waiting, all of which is opposed to a hasty spirit: 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

In whatever we are called to undertake, it is our privilege to seek to know that the Lord is going before us: not we ourselves going first, and then expecting the Lord to follow us.

Now, as it respects those who have heard me, and have then gone elsewhere, I have always been careful to avoid passing any judgment on the course they have thought right to take, lest I should appear to assume anything like undue authority in the church of God; but this feeling must not prevent me from pointing out that which I believe to be the most scriptural course for my dear hearers to adopt.

First, it can never be profitable for living souls to seek a living Saviour under a dead ministry and among carnal professors, whatever conveniences such a procedure may seem to offer.

Secondly, our Lord's promise runs thus: that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst of them; and elsewhere He says: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.' So that I think that wheresoever we have been favoured to enjoy His presence, we should be persuaded that that presence is withdrawn thence, that the glory is departed, before *we* withdraw. Let the Lord go first, and then we may safely follow Him.

But some may be ready to say, How may I know when and where the Lord manifests His presence?—There is always, more or less, a peculiar glory attending His footsteps. He will, in a greater or less degree, make the place of His feet glorious, whatever may be the means He is pleased to employ. He went before the children of Israel in a pillar of a cloud by day, and in the shining of a flaming fire by night. His peculiar presence is thus marked.



He is, and will be, that which His seeking family are most in need of. Israel of old wanted a shade by day to screen them from the sun, and light by night to guide them in the way; and the Lord Himself was both these to them. His presence is known amongst us, by His bestowing from time to time that which we feel we stand in need of. His promise is that the poor of the flock that wait upon Him shall know that it is the word of the Lord. It is a mercy when we are enabled to look more at the blessing received, than at the channel through which it flows.

Again, our Lord promised: 'I will send you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.' So that wheresoever the work of the Spirit of God is carried on in the hearts of the Lord's dear family, we know that God is with them indeed.

'There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her.' Here you have His sacred presence, dispensing the riches of His grace among the poor and needy. 'She shall not be moved,' however feeble: for, 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' Not the Almighty Jehovah. 'God shall help her, and that right early.' Now, wheresoever the Lord makes us drink of the river of His pleasures, places the shewbread hot and fresh upon the golden table, causes the feast of fat

things to be displayed, smiles upon one, speaks a word of reproof to another, of Divine consolation to another, calls forth the dormant graces of faith, hope, gratitude, love, and thankfulness in the heart of another—in a word, reveals and manifests Himself as suited to the innumerable wants of His waiting family, and works in their hearts a measure of faith, so as to receive Him in whatever character or relation they stand in need of Him ; I say that wheresoever these and the like blessings, mercies, and favours are bestowed and received, there indeed is the presence of Him whom our souls love.

Once more. Without leaning too much on human props, we may safely converse with those amongst us whom we believe to be most favoured of the Lord, concerning the path in which we are called to walk. The saints may often be a help one to another, both by their prayers and their counsel. The Lord Himself takes notice of this; as it is written in Malachi : ‘ Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it.’

I have thought it right to express my views thus freely concerning our present trial. I disclaim all intention of dictating to any. But if the Lord should be pleased to bless the foregoing remarks to the comforting, confirming, and settling the minds of any of His dear family, He shall have all the praise.

Brethren, may you and I be enabled still to wait upon God, and He has promised that our expectation shall not be cut off. He will lead us by a right way, though it may be by a way that we know not ; but

what we know not now, He has promised we shall know hereafter.

Beloved, farewell. May the God of patience and consolation comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. So prays your willing servant in Christ and for His sake,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCIV.

Cambridge Terrace, February 3, 1871.

My dearly beloved in Christ Jesus,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all in Him. Amen.

I have been thinking of what is reported in ecclesiastical history, concerning the beloved disciple, John. It is said that he lived to be a hundred years old; that he formed and presided over the seven churches in Asia; that, having been banished to the island called Patmos by the Roman Emperor Domitian, he there wrote the Revelation; and that after this he was recalled to Ephesus, where he finished his days; and being unable to preach the word of life, through bodily weakness, he used to be brought into the church, where he constantly repeated to his beloved flock the following words: ‘Little children, love one another.’

Now, though absent in body, I would say the same to you: ‘Little children, love one another.’ In these words there are two things to be considered. 1. The characters described, ‘Little children.’ 2. The words of exhortation, ‘Love one another.’

We are not to understand the description here in a literal sense, but rather as pointing out one charac-

teristic of the household of faith. We read in Peter of 'newborn babes.' This may represent those, who, though they are partakers of Divine life, from which they have a spiritual appetite, are principally known by a cry to God from the heart. But the term 'little children' describes a further manifestation of Divine grace in a poor sinner. Indeed, John addresses the whole church by this term: '*Little children*, keep yourselves from idols.' And our Lord said to those who surrounded Him: 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' A babe can scarcely be said to know that it is a babe; but a little child knows that it is a little one, that it is weak, that it is dependent on others, that it needs instruction and protection. And so all Zion's children know and feel these things.

John says: 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake;' so that it is the blessed privilege of these little ones to receive knowledge of salvation, through the forgiveness of sins. Again, 'I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.' Naturally speaking, there are four classes of persons more especially known by little children; parents, brothers and sisters, nurses, and instructors; and so it is in a spiritual sense. These dear little children are brought to know, by the Spirit of adoption, God, as their *Father*. The poor prodigal looked to God in this relation, while he was in a starving condition, and yet a great way off. And the Lord promises: 'As one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will I comfort ~~you~~ you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.'

Our Lord says: 'One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are *brethren*.' Therefore 'let brotherly love continue;' for, if we have been taught of God, we are certainly taught to love as brethren. Again, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' The best way that I know of getting much love in our hearts to the brethren is by seeking after the love of Christ. For what is it we love in one another? It is the blessed image of the Saviour; and the more we can get of His love in our hearts, the more shall we love one another.

But some may be ready to say, I do indeed desire to love all the children of God, but many of them have so much in them, and about them, that is unlovable, that I keep at a distance from them.—But then, you do not act like the Saviour in this matter; for sure I am that He never saw anything in me or in you to love, until He was pleased to manifest His love towards us, by renewing us in some measure after His own image. He manifests His love to us, by making us such as He would have us to be.

Those who are *nursing* fathers and mothers in the church, will be found out to be such by the little ones; and those whom God condescends to make *teachers* of righteousness, will be revered and valued by all those who are made willing to be learners in the school of Christ.

Secondly, as to the word of exhortation: 'Love one another.' When all the saints are little children indeed, this will follow as the consequence thereof; and yet the exhortation cannot be too often repeated.

For though the words in which it is contained may not be gone from the memory, yet the realization of it is often at a very low ebb. One peculiar use of repeating the word of exhortation is this—that the Lord's word spoken home to the heart of a poor sinner by Himself, is attended with a quickening, reviving, restoring, renewing, and refreshing power. For the gospel is *the power* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is that power alone that first quickened our souls into life, convinced us of the evil of sin, especially the sin of unbelief, made us willing to come to God, as lost, ruined, undone sinners, that we might be saved by free and sovereign grace, that wrought faith in us to believe and embrace the Saviour, and that drew our hearts to love Him and all that is His : it is, I say, the same almighty power that must work in us both to will and to do, even to the end. And whenever God is graciously pleased to speak in, through, and by, any instrument of His own preparing, to the hearts and souls of His dear children, there is, as it were, a renewing of His own work in them.

And thus it was, that though Peter knew that those to whom he was writing were acquainted with the things whereof he spoke, yet he thought it meet, as long as he was in the body, to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, knowing that he must shortly put off his tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ had shown him. Let none be startled because Peter uses the expression, '*pure minds*,' as all that are taught of God know that in themselves, ~~that is~~, in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing ; for

Peter here speaks not of the natural mind or memory, but of the mind of Christ, which God gives to His dear children in their regeneration; so that however impure they are in themselves, the new man, the spiritual man, the hidden man of the heart, which is God's workmanship in us, is pure, even as He is pure; for John says: 'Every man that hath this hope in him' (that is, a good hope through grace), 'purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' It is in this sense that our dear Lord says: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' God's work of creation, providence, and grace, is, in all respects, a perfect work.

When we began this letter, I did not think that I should be able to spin it out to its present length. I have been very poorly all day, but feel a little revived while dictating this. Once more let me add the Apostle's words as my own, 'My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.'—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCV.

Cambridge Terrace, February 10, 1871.

To the little Flock whom I love in the Lord at Staining Lane,—May grace, mercy, and peace ever abide with you. Amen.

There can be no just ground for fear, though we are but a little flock, seeing our Lord has said: 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Nothing can be more free than a gift, and nothing more precious than the

kingdom of heaven. It includes all grace here, and eternal glory hereafter.

Barren, empty, and dry in spirit, as I too generally feel myself, I am ready to inquire, What can I say that may be profitable to you, whom I love in the Lord? Blessed be God! there is one never-failing theme, even our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. Having nothing else to say, Paul determined to preach only Christ crucified.

My dear friends, it is well when the Lord's ministering servants are thoroughly emptied, and kept empty, that Christ may be the sum and substance, the All and in all, of their ministry.

There are four things of which I will speak briefly, God enabling me, concerning this blessed Lord Jesus.

1. Who He is.
2. What He is.
3. What He has done.
4. What He is still doing for the salvation of poor, lost, ruined sinners, whom Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, has loved with an everlasting love.

1. He is the self-existent and independent I AM, over all, God blessed for evermore. He is the eternal Son of God. Unto the Son the Father saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' He is a distinct Person in the ever-blessed Trinity in Unity. Hence baptism is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In the fulness of time He became man, by taking the children's flesh and blood into union with His Divine Person. He is the Word that was made flesh, the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. Thus is He perfect God and perfect Man, in one all-glorious and indivisible Person, possessing in Himself all the



attributes of Godhead and the tender sympathies of manhood. Being all this, whatsoever is done by Him must of necessity be perfect and complete. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it by any creature, whether good or bad.

2. We must consider what He is. And this may be said of Him in one word—that He is all and in all, the very sum and substance, the root and fountain, of all being and existence. But with respect to His dear family, He is in an especial sense their All and in all ; their covenant God ; their Head, to direct and influence ; their Sovereign, to rule and govern ; their near Kinsman, Friend, Brother, Husband, to redeem, save, and love them, even from everlasting to everlasting. He is our Shepherd, to feed us ; our Prophet, to teach us.

3. What He has done for us. This, my dear friends, includes everything. We could do nothing for ourselves. He has done all for us. He lived for us, to work out and bring in an everlasting righteousness to justify all His ungodly people. All mankind are sinners by nature, but only those who are taught of God feel and know it. There is nothing that a poor lost, ruined, undone, sensible sinner so much needs as the forgiveness of sin ; and our dear Lord is expressly named Jesus, a Saviour, because He saves His people from their sins. This He has done, as before noticed, by living for them. His life, in all its perfection and obedience, is accounted by Jehovah as ours, by imputation ; so that a poor sinner, who never has done, and never can do, anything good, is accounted righteous by a just and holy God, through the

obedience of His dear Son. This righteousness is proclaimed in the gospel, revealed to faith, and made known in the experience of poor sinners, who are thus justified freely from all things from which they could never be justified by the law of Moses.

Again, Jesus hath died for us ; and by the shedding of His precious blood hath made a full and perfect atonement to the law and justice of God, for all the sins and transgressions, original and actual, past, present, and to come, of all His covenant family. The fruit of this redemption is pardon and peace, revealed in the conscience of a sensible sinner, communion and fellowship with God as a reconciled Father, nearness and access to Him, by confession, supplication, and praise ; God's love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost ; so that such, having much forgiven, are, like Mary, constrained to love much.

These blessed realities are by no means always *enjoyed* by God's covenant family ; *they* are frequently, like David, shut up, and cannot come forth ; but the blessings are always the same ; and those who have been once favoured to receive them shall never finally lose them. They may be frequently withdrawn and withheld ; but Jesus says to such : 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' And when He comes, He always brings light and life, joy and peace, consolation and love with Him ; His reward is with Him, and His work before Him ; yea, He Himself is all and everything that we can need for time and eternity.

4. What our ~~blessed~~ Jesus is still doing for us. On

earth He made intercession for the transgressors ; and now, as a Priest, He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Not by any fresh offering for sin ; for this was done for ever, when He offered up Himself once for all ; when He said, ' It is finished,' bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. Nor by any new petitions does He make intercession for us ; but by appearing in the presence of God for us with His own precious blood, which ever pleads before God, by its efficacy, for the pardon and forgiveness of such sinners as we are. And I am fully persuaded that, as the all-comprehending mind and intention of Him who is Immanuel, God with us, included all the persons, cases, and circumstances of His whole family when He was on earth, so He now appears in heaven, ever living to make intercession for us, by presenting both the one offering of Himself, and that all-prevalent intercession already made for us. He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do upon earth, and now He ever lives in heaven both to receive and to dispense the blessed fruits of His mediation ; and it is only through this intercession of the Saviour in heaven, where He ever appears in the presence of God for us, as our Head and Representative, that the petitions of such poor helpless sinners as we are, find acceptance with God, and are heard and answered in everlasting love and infinite wisdom by our kind and gracious Father in heaven.

Another thing that He is still doing for us, is the gathering to Himself of His whole family, by the various means which He has appointed, and by keeping them through all their trials, afflictions, and

sorrows, yea, notwithstanding death itself, by His own almighty power through faith unto salvation: for Himself says, Of all that the Father giveth me I will lose nothing, but will raise it up again at the last day.

I now conclude with my love to you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

P.S.—This letter but very poorly sets forth the blessed subject of which it treats. The subject is inexhaustible. May the good Lord condescend to lead and guide us all more and more into the realization and experience of it. Amen.

XCVI.

Cambridge Terrace, February 17, 1871.

To the remnant who wait upon God, and for God, at Staining Lane Chapel, their unworthy servant in Christ still wishes all grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

I send you another letter, not that I may be approved, but that you may know the love that I have to you in Christ Jesus. Like Paul of old, I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. It was Eve who first sinned; she, being deceived, was in the transgression. Adam was not deceived. So that we learn that all sin commenced through deception.

Now, the greatest enemy we ever meet with is our own sinful self. Neither Satan nor the world could ever gain any advantage against us, were it not for indwelling sin. Satan could make no impression on the Saviour, because in Him there was no sin. He says: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' But *we* have our own sinful self, a body of sin and death, a heart that is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; a law in the members, warring against the law of the mind, bringing us into captivity to the law of sin that is in our members; the flesh, lusting against the Spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would. It is this wretched, sinful self, that meets us everywhere and in everything; proposing all that is evil to us, and opposing all that is good.

It stands principally in an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. As it is by a true and living faith we draw near to God, so through the power of unbelief we depart from Him. This unbelief, with its brow of brass, often pretends to justify itself through false humility: it tells the poor sinner that he is too bad to be saved; that he has not a sufficient amount of Christian experience to come to God with; that he must wait a little longer, till he is furnished with graces and fruits, with a better will, a more feeling heart, and nobody knows what else, before he pretends to seek after God, or to hope in His mercy. Ah! my dear friends, how very deceitful is this sinful old man of ours.

Then there are all the carnal desires of the flesh and of the mind: covetousness in its various forms,

which, in brief, consists in our desiring to possess that which it would be sinful and unlawful for us to have. This comprehends every desire and wish that is contrary to the will of God. How often are we sadly deceived (at least, I must say I am) in thinking that it would be much better that some of God's appointments concerning ourselves and others were different from what they are. In this we discover *rebellious* self. We are assured in the Word that all things work together for good to them that love God, but our perverse and rebellious minds suggest that many things might be better than they are.

Thus I have proved that sinful self is our greatest enemy.

Again : self often appears under another form, as *righteous* self. This keeps us at as great a distance from God as the other, and as frequently works in the experience of God's dear children. Job was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, and there was none like him in all the earth. This was God's own testimony concerning him ; and all that he said about himself, with regard to his integrity, the uprightness of his conduct, the kindness of his disposition towards those who were inferior to him, in a word, his whole life, walk, and conversation before God and man, was true ; yet it was necessary that Job should be tried in the furnace of affliction, both for God's honour and for the advantage of His servant. Why so, seeing, as I have said, that Job had spoken that which was right concerning both God and himself ? It was necessary for this reason—that in all his righteousness Job beheld

himself, and seems to have lost sight of this fact, that whatever he was as a good man, he was by the grace of God alone, and not by anything of or from himself. When he had put to silence his three friends, Elihu came as God's messenger, declaring the matter as it was ; after which God confirmed the word of His servant, and the counsel of His messenger. Job was now brought to a deeper discovery and a clearer knowledge both of himself and of God's dealings with him. *Then* he was constrained to say, 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Job did not repent of any of the good things which he had said or done, nor did he deny that they *were* good ; but he now saw God, who had worked in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It was this that made him abhor himself, and justify God.

My dear friends, it is Satan's work to deceive us, through both sinful self and righteous self ; and thus we too often call good evil, and evil good ; put light for darkness, and darkness for light.

You will be ready to say, What shall we do, thus surrounded with difficulties and dangers on all hands ? —The Word tells us to ask counsel of God : in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto Him. But perhaps my dear friends are, like myself, too often without heart or disposition to call upon God ; no perceptible faith or love ; few, if any, desires after that which is good ; in a word, free among the dead, like the slain whom God seems to remember no more.

How then ? Why, still wait upon God. But perhaps there is some forbidden path open before us, from which we fancy we might enjoy a little present ease and comfort. Shall we not try that, and wait till we get a more pious frame of mind, a more religious disposition ? Sinful self will incline to this ; but, depend upon it, this is all delusion, and will end in bitterness at last. Therefore I say, let us watch and wait, when we have no power to do so. This will seem a contradiction ; and so it is, and will be, until God is pleased to show us what it is to do nothing, and yet to be able to do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us.

All true religion, from first to last, is an enigma to man's wisdom. But what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Now we see through a glass, darkly, or in a riddle ; but then, face to face ; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known ; that is, when the Lord shall appear, and make us like Himself.

Sometimes I think that, through the Lord's goodness, my health is improving, and then again I often feel as bad as ever, but everybody else says I am getting better. My dear friends, may we still be enabled to go on besieging the throne of grace. You know our Lord says : 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' If it is the Lord's will, my desire is that I may be strengthened again to proclaim amongst you the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to tell you what He hath done for my soul. But this, and everything else that concerns me, I wish to be enabled to leave

with Him, who hath done, is doing, and will do, all things well.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCVII.

Cambridge Terrace, February 19, 1871.

My dear Friends,—This is Lord's Day morning ; and I am, in the providence of God, through bodily affliction still kept back from preaching the word of eternal life amongst you. I miss the privilege of preaching. I often get very dry and barren in spirit for the want of meditation. Nothing tends more to keep the soul alive, than drawing water, through meditation and prayer, out of the wells of salvation. And so I thought I would employ the present season in preparing an outline of what I have been thinking about this morning, for you to read and hear. May the Lord condescend to make it profitable to your souls.

The first chapter of the first Epistle general of Peter is a very precious portion of God's most holy Word. If you read the first seven or eight verses, you will find that the Apostle describes the saints whom he addresses, as being built on the right foundation. He calls them 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' Further, he says that they were 'begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ;' and that the substance of this hope is 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'

Thus blessed, we find that they were a rejoicing people, as well they might be : for in all these things they *greatly* rejoiced.

But they were also called to experience many changes. God was the same, Christ the same, the Spirit the same, their religion the same ; and yet, as I said, like the whole family of God, they experienced many changes ; as may be gathered from what the Apostle says in the sixth verse : ‘ Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.’

Some professors in our days say that when the Lord’s people are once delivered from the guilt of sin, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, there is an end to their doubts and fears, to their trials and exercises. But I believe we shall find that the testimony of Scripture differs from these views. The saints of old found that the way to heaven was a path of tribulation to the end. Though Jacob was much tried when he was young, I believe that his deepest afflictions were experienced in old age. Moses’ heaviest trials befell him in his latter days, so did David’s ; and our Lord Himself passed through His greatest agony at the end of His work. So those in the passage above mentioned. They had indeed rejoiced, but were now in heaviness through manifold temptations.

Here is, first, their present condition. They were in heaviness ; which intends that they were bowed down with many weights, both inward and outward, producing a state of mind very different from what they had formerly experienced, when, in the

service of God, they could mount up with wings as eagles, could run in the way of His commandments with enlargement of heart, and were like the chariots of His willing people; when they could delight themselves in the Almighty, in His ways, word, ordinances, and family; yea, when they could delight themselves in the abundance of peace, were satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord. But now they are bowed down, and cannot lift up themselves; the Lord withholds His sensible presence, He hideth Himself, both as a God of grace and providence, and they are troubled. Perhaps they are exercised with family trials, bodily afflictions, and much coldness and deadness in hearing the word, so that there is scarcely any heart or desire either to seek the Lord or to call on His name. Like Pharaoh's chariots, they drag heavily.

The time of this heaviness is said to be *now*: 'Though *now* for a season ye are in heaviness;' that is, at the present time, the present day or hour. It is not that which has passed away, but that which is *now* experienced; and the poor child of God can no more get away from it, in his own strength, than he can create a world. Sometimes it is the meditation of terror; at others, there is such stupidity, that there is no meditating on anything.

But this is not to last always; it is only for a season: 'Now *for a season*, if need be, ye are in heaviness.' Both Job and Hezekiah thought that there would be no end to their afflictions, as may be gathered from the Book of Job, and from the writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick, and

was recovered of his sickness. But not so : the anger of our gracious God and Father is but for a moment ; in His favour is life : weeping *may* endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. There must be heaviness among the children of the bride-chamber, when the Bridegroom is withdrawn from them. I believe that that man's religion is little worth, who, if through temptation, affliction, and sorrow, he is compelled to live at a distance from the Lord, does not feel heaviness and grief on account of it. My dear friends, the disciples' hearts were filled with sorrow, when the Saviour told them that it was expedient for them that He should go away. True, He gave them the promise that He would see them again, but when hope is deferred, it maketh the heart sick. The promise is very encouraging ; but it is the fulfilment of the promise that we want, and it is only *by faith* that we can wait for it.

All the afflictions, whether of soul or body, that we are called to experience in this time state must soon end. Paul says : ' Our light affliction is but for a moment ; ' and, ' I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' Yet, notwithstanding all this, we are often in heaviness through manifold temptations. How often does this now, this present time, occur to us ! But it is only *for a season*, a very short season. The day of prosperity and the day of adversity succeed one another.

Thus you see that all the Lord's dear people

who are built upon the Rock of eternal ages, often experience the *now*, the season of heaviness, described by Peter.

Again : There is the cause, or that which produces the heaviness spoken of, which is said to be ‘ manifold temptations.’ Temptations are of two kinds—those that spring from, and lead to evil, and those which are ascribed immediately to God Himself. Of the first kind of temptations, there are four sorts.

1. Those that come from indwelling sin. Of these James speaks, when he says : ‘ Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.’ The thoughts are occupied about things that are unlawful and ungodly, through the medium of the senses, as hearing, seeing, tasting, and handling. Achan saw the Babylonish garment and wedge of gold, and coveted them. Ahaz saw a heathen altar at Damascus, and ordered one like it to be set in God’s temple at Jerusalem. In our own times, the Established Church is unhappily imitating Rome in its idolatrous worship ; and the Dissenters are in like manner imitating that church from which they have separated.

The ear is often deceived, when the trumpet gives an uncertain sound. To touch those things which God has forbidden, must always be dangerous and sinful ; and to taste ungodly pleasures and amusements, draws away the heart and soul from the pure river of the water of life.

Now, to feel oneself exposed to, and continually tried with, all these things, must necessarily produce heaviness ; as Paul says : ‘ O wretched man that I

am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' or, 'this body of death.'

2. Temptation arises from the suggestions of Satan. Our Lord Himself was led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, though Satan could make no impression upon this Rock; for He said: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' Satan tempted David to number the people; and accused godly Job before God Himself. He stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest, to resist him. In a word, he is ever ready to entangle the prey. He walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. O these fiery darts of Satan! what heaviness of spirit do they often produce, meeting with, and inflaming, every corruption of our fallen nature.

3. Temptation sometimes arises from our nearest relations and dearest friends. It was so even in Paradise. Satan tempted the woman, and she the man. God says: 'If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, &c., thou shalt not consent unto him.' Who is there among the Lord's family, who has not suffered more or less from this kind of temptation? It has often been like cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes. Many a sigh and groan has been thus produced, causing much heaviness of heart.

4. The world is a constant source of temptation to the church of the living God. They and we possess in common the same fallen nature, the same

sinful propensities and inclinations ; and it calls for much prayer and watchfulness, that we may be preserved from the various entanglements presented to us. To avoid conformity to the world in those things which are sinful, is no easy task. Nothing but the preserving power of God is sufficient for this. We often experience much heaviness through all these various temptations.

There is also another kind of temptation, to which James refers, when he says : ‘ My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.’ And again : ‘ Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.’ Concerning this kind of temptation, we read that God did tempt Abraham, when He said to him : ‘ Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.’

Let us consider for a moment the nature of this trial. God had promised to Abraham a son. He had waited nearly twenty-five years for the fulfilment of this promise ; and all the other promises, relating to the land of Canaan, a numerous offspring to inherit it, a spiritual seed who were typified thereby, and who were to possess the heavenly inheritance—all these promises concerned Christ, were in Christ, who is the sum and substance of them all—all these were made to depend upon the gift of Isaac. And now Abraham is called to give up the whole into the hand of God, and to slay his son. What then was

to become of all the promises? What a trial was this!

Now I believe that all the spiritual seed of Abraham are more or less tried by God in a similar manner. God often bestows a blessing, and then calls us to give it up; and wherever He is graciously pleased to put His fear in the heart, and to work a similar obedience of faith, all shall find that in every loss they gain something. Yes, like Abraham, they obtain God's own testimony concerning His work in their souls; but oh! what heaviness do such trials or temptations produce.

But the Apostle says: '*If need be*, ye are in heaviness,' &c. The word *if* does not always in Scripture imply a doubt, but is often used to affirm a fact, as in Colossians: '*If ye then be risen with Christ*,'—that is, *Ye are*, or, *Seeing ye are risen with Christ*,—'*seek those things which are above*.' So here, '*If need be*, ye are in heaviness,' that is, there is a necessity, or need be, for what follows; which necessity arises from the will of God. He has purposed that all His children shall through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. There is no other path thither.

Again, the Saviour tells His disciples: '*Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized*.' The conformity of all the members of Christ to the glorious Head, is the great end and design of Jehovah. For this the Apostle prays, when he says: '*That I may know Him*' (the Saviour), '*and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death*.' To have the mind of

Christ, the Spirit of Christ, to be made conformable to Christ, is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon the saints.

This conformity consists in our being made like to the image of the only-begotten Son of God. As He, in this world, was despised and rejected of men, a **Man** of sorrows and acquainted with grief, tempted by Satan, and forsaken of God, so also His true followers partake more or less of His sufferings. Our conformity to Christ, while we are in this world, consists much more than we often think, in our being made like unto what He was in this world. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. The sufferings came first, and the glory followed ; and we, if we suffer with Him, shall be also glorified together. No cross, no crown.

Now, my dear friends, is there not a need be for all the heaviness we experience through manifold temptations ? It is said of Jesus Himself, that He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Ought we then to wonder if such be sometimes our experience ? Do we not indeed desire to be like Him who is our All and in all, both here and hereafter ?

It is also said : ‘Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith’ (as the result) ‘might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.’ Concerning the trial of faith I have spoken a little, with respect to Abraham. It is ‘much more precious than of gold, that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.’ The temptations of God’s family are called *fiery* trials ; designed to purge, and not to destroy them,

as they often fear; but are found to praise, and honour, and glory—to the praise of God, who bestows and sustains all the faith which is given to the saints to be tried. God delights in, and praises, His own work. ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’

By the trial of faith, God is honoured, when we are enabled to trust in Him; and He says, ‘Them that honour me, I will honour.’

By the trial of faith, God is also glorified; as it is said of Abraham, that he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Thus we have all the benefit, and God has all the glory.

And this is openly manifested at the appearing of Jesus Christ. The appearing of Christ is variously spoken of in the Word of God. Sometimes it signifies His first advent, or manifestation in the flesh; sometimes the various discoveries He is pleased to make of Himself to His people, either in secret, or through the several means of Divine grace, as prayer, meditation, hearing the word, &c. But in the passage under consideration, it means, first, those various answers to prayer which He is graciously pleased to grant to His family; and secondly, His coming when He shall appear without sin unto salvation. Then, all the difficulties, trials, afflictions, temptations, with whatsoever takes place in the experience of His dear people, will be made plain. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Then all shall be found to the praise, and honour, and glory of Him who hath loved us with an everlasting love, washed

us from our sins in His precious blood, clothed us with an everlasting righteousness, saved us with an everlasting salvation, and blessed us with an eternal inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, when Jesus shall appear to take all His blood-bought family home to Himself.

O! my dear brethren, may we be found among those who are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Through the Lord's goodness, I have been better the last week, and am enabled again to come down stairs. My desire is, if it be the Lord's will, that I may be strengthened to come amongst you again in the Lord's strength, and to make mention of His righteousness, even of His only.

May the blessing of God rest upon Zion, and upon all her children, wheresoever they are. Such is the prayer of—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCVIII.

Cambridge Terrace, March 2, 1871.

Dearly Beloved,—I send you a few thoughts on John vi. 27, with which my mind has been occupied: 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed.'

First, note that this was spoken by Him who

spake as never man spake, and who Himself is the Truth. This is gathered from the preceding verse.

Secondly, observe that these words were spoken to a multitude of the Jews, who had lately had an experience of that tender care which the Saviour takes of all His works. They had followed Him into a mountain, and He performed a miracle to feed them. They now came to Him again, and He charges them with following Him, not for the sake of the miracle, but because they did eat of the loaves, and were filled. This led to His speaking the words under consideration.

This passage is a part of that gospel concerning which our Lord said to His disciples: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' It is quite plain that this is not to be taken in an unlimited sense, as there are many creatures that cannot possibly be included in the Saviour's commission. Angels are not intended; nor can the whole human family be meant, because the gospel never was, and never will be, preached to all men. It can then only be understood of those who, in the providence of God, are brought under its sound.

Our Lord speaks of the meat that perisheth. This intends every description of food suited to man; and it is remarkable that nothing in nature perishes sooner than food; even the provision made for animals, as grass, &c., very soon withers away. And as for the food of man, how soon it becomes unfit for use. This, I think, points out the perishing condition of man's nature. We bring the seeds of mortality **into** the world with us. 'It is appointed unto all men

once to die.' All this is the consequence of sin ; and therefore the food which is necessary, and which God has given to sustain our short existence, is perishable like ourselves. As mortals, God has been pleased to give us food suited to our present condition.

Our Lord said to the multitude by whom He was surrounded: 'Labour' (or work) 'not for the meat which perisheth.' Neither can this be understood in an unrestricted sense ; for God has appointed that man should eat bread in the sweat of his face. Indeed, all the temporal concerns of men require labour ; and the Apostle says that 'if any will not work, neither shall he eat.' So that our Lord does not mean that men should not labour at all for the meat which perisheth ; but, not in the sense intended in our text.

Our Lord speaks also of that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, for which we *are* to labour. By this meat we must understand that spiritual provision which God has made for those who need it. For as natural life requires to be sustained by natural food, so spiritual life is maintained by spiritual food. And this food is no other than our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, who says: 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' And whenever spiritual life is communicated to a poor sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, it discovers itself by the wants, longings, and desires of that poor sinner. Let him do what he may, he finds that there is nothing beneath the sun that can satisfy his hungerings and cravings ; and, like the prodigal, he fears he shall perish with hunger. But this, my dear friends,

shall never be ; for He who is the Author and Giver of life will surely sustain it.

Our dear Lord and Saviour condescends to feed our souls, by enabling us to receive Him through believing ; and when we get His ever-blessed Majesty into our hearts and affections, we find in Him that which can alone satisfy our souls. It is a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined. This is the meat that endures unto everlasting life ; and by thus feeding upon it we possess eternal life, for

‘He that eats immortal food
Immortally must live.’

It is a whole Christ that we are thus enabled to receive ; God and Man in one glorious and indivisible Person. As God, He lives for ever ; and as Man, He is the resurrection and the life, the first-begotten of the dead, and the firstfruits of them that slept ; and by virtue of our union to Him, we live, because He lives. Death hath no more dominion over *Him* ; nor shall death, temporal, spiritual, or eternal, ever destroy *us*. He will swallow up death in victory. Thus it is that by virtue of this blessed food with which He feeds the hungry, the meek, the poor, and needy, we endure unto everlasting life.

‘Labour not for the meat which perisheth, &c.’ I have already shown that our Lord does not mean that we are not to work for our natural food ; neither does He mean that we are not to ask God for it ; for He taught His disciples to say, ‘Give us this day,’ or, ‘~~day~~ by day our daily bread.’ But observe that the

multitude by whom the Saviour was surrounded, followed Him, not for His own sake, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled. It was on this account that He told them not to labour for the meat which perisheth; as He says elsewhere: 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The Jews appear to have had some understanding of the Saviour's meaning, for they inquired, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' To which He replied: 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

You will observe that the meat spoken of in our text is said to be *given* by the Son of man; and yet we are told to *labour*, or *work*, for it. There is no contradiction here. God's free gift is obtained through believing. True faith is the work of God; it is the gift of God. It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do: and we read of the 'work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.' James says that faith without works is dead. And Paul speaks the same language when he says: 'Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them' (i. e. Israel of old): 'but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Believing is, in scripture language, called working or labouring. Sometimes it is called striving: 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate:' and it is truly so called, for faith wrestles with God in prayer, strives against unbelief, is often called to sustain very heavy burdens, and meets with continual opposition, both from within and from without. A life of faith is indeed a life of labour, of working, of striving, of fighting. But, blessed be God! that faith which is of His operation must and shall be crowned with victory. 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

What our Lord means in the text, and what all who are taught of God are brought to feel, is, that in all our desires, prayers, and aims, the things of God, that is, spiritual things, should be first and chief with us. Let us inquire what it is that chiefly occupies our thoughts, attention, and desires. Is it the meat which perisheth, or that meat which endureth unto everlasting life? Is it self, or the Saviour? the world, or the church? this world and its conveniences, or that which is to come? earth or heaven? For, depend upon it, where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. Perhaps every one of us will find in himself abundant cause to lament and confess his own deficiency, if not destitution, as to these things. What shall I say, first to myself, and then to you, my dear friends? May we be enabled, from a sense of need, from an increase of Divine grace, to labour in meditation, in reading, in prayer, and in the use of all other appointed means; to work, in the

scripture sense, more abundantly for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, and which the Son of man has promised to give us.

Thus you see that God's free grace in giving all, and our labouring, believing, and working, well agree and harmonize together. Indeed, where there is true religion, they can never be severed; for make the tree good, and the fruit must and shall be good. So says the Saviour, and who dares deny it? 'Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.'

Singleness of eye, simplicity of intention, and uprightness of heart, are well-pleasing in God's sight. It is He who must make and keep us honest, if we are so. Let us ask ourselves, as in His sight, which we value most: the things of the world, or the things of God, the things that are seen, or the things that are not seen. God forbid that we should overlook or forget answers to prayer about temporal things. This is not what is meant, when the Saviour says: 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth.' Jacob could never forget how the Lord kept him and fed him all his life long; nor should we be unmindful of those daily benefits with which God loads us. But if the world were put in one scale, and Divine grace here and glory hereafter, in the other, which do we think would preponderate in our esteem? It is said of Moses, that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. This was all through faith. Can we say the same? or do we desire to say the same? Perhaps we are compelled to own that to will is

present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. Be it so. Though we are deficient in everything, yet God's grace is all-sufficient for us. Therefore, may every discovery of our own weakness, helplessness, and insufficiency, lead us more and more to cry mightily unto Him who is God all-sufficient, who is almighty to save. I really believe that after all our lawful striving, wrestling, labouring, and working, we shall be most willingly constrained to ascribe all honour, praise, and glory to Him who has done all for us, is all to us, and all in us. So says His unworthy servant, and so say my dear friends whom I love in the Lord, and for His sake.

Our text says, that it is the Son of man who gives us that meat which endures to everlasting life. If He condescends to give it us, no power in earth or hell shall ever deprive us of it. How dishonouring to His Sacred Majesty, to suppose for one moment that His intention concerning His covenant family can ever be frustrated. He is *almighty* to save, and was appointed to His work by the Father: 'For Him hath God the Father sealed.' This signifies His being chosen and appointed to be the Saviour of men, and anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. A seal frequently bears the name and image of him whose it is; and our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express (or as Dr. Owen says, 'the engraved') image of His Person. Also the Father's name, that is, all His attributes and perfections, is in Him; and He, by His Spirit, writes His new name, and stamps His blessed image of love, life, and peace, on our hearts.

The Saviour is distinguished, as Man and Mediator, from all others, by the fulness of the Spirit bestowed upon Him. This is His sealing. And it is by His Spirit He condescends to seal us. Thus both Himself and His family are known by one Spirit, which dwelleth with us, and shall be in us. This is that Holy Spirit of promise whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

I have been led out to a greater length than I expected. May the good Lord condescend to bless what is written, however deficient it may be, to your comfort and edification, and His own glory.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

XCIX.

Cambridge Terrace, March 10, 1871.

My dear Friends,—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

It is the sovereign will of my ever-gracious God and Father that I should still be kept back, through bodily infirmity, from the enjoyment of that which I esteem to be one of my greatest privileges, namely, meeting His family in the public worship of God. To be enabled to speak in His dear name of those things which He has graciously taught me, has indeed been my delight. I can say with the Psalmist: 'Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth;' nor can anything in this world make up to me the deficiency which I feel. The 42nd Psalm well expresses what I experience: 'As the hart panteth

after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God,' &c. I long for the enjoyment of His public worship; but as this is, in infinite wisdom, withheld from me, I adopt the present method of making known to you a little of the meditation which I am sometimes favoured with, hoping that it may not be altogether unprofitable.

I daily experience the truth of what Paul says in Romans viii. 26, 27: 'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' Oh! what extreme ignorance do I often feel as to this matter. But, blessed be God! I also know something of what follows: 'But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.' To be favoured with communion and fellowship with God in private prayer, is one of the highest privileges bestowed upon His family; but our ignorance therein is one of the infirmities of which the Apostle speaks at the beginning of the verse: 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,' by which he means the Holy Spirit. His helping our infirmities intends His helping us against them. This form of speech is adopted elsewhere in the Scriptures; as one said: 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief;' that is, Help me against my unbelief.

As I have already said, our ignorance is one of our great infirmities. The wisest men are by nature ignorant of God, as it is written: 'After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God.' Nor can any, by the power of human intellect, ever find out God to perfection.

We are also ignorant of ourselves, of our true state

and condition. This, all who are taught of God are made to know and feel. Every one finds that his own heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked ; and oh ! how does this discovery astonish a poor sinner. And yet more, after this has been revealed to us, and we think we know it, we still go on every day finding out more and more of this sad truth.

Being thus ignorant of God and of ourselves, we must necessarily be ignorant of those things that we stand in need of. By nature we know nothing of the Mediator between God and men, of that everlasting covenant which is ordered in all things and sure, of the blessings of Divine grace here, and of eternal glory hereafter ; but we are like the beasts that perish. One who was eminently taught of God said : ‘I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.’

In such circumstances, how can we possibly know what we should pray for as we ought ? Indeed, all prayer, without the influence of the Spirit of God, is nothing better than self-delusion. We may think we pray, when a form of sound words is used, but if they are not dictated by the Spirit of God, if they do not come from the heart, if they are not attended with faith, they are nothing. God says of Israel of old : ‘This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’ And again, our Lord said to the woman at the well : ‘God is a Spirit ; and they

that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'

Hence the holy and ever-blessed Spirit is promised, in Zechariah, to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (that is, the church of God), as the Spirit of grace and of supplications. He it is that condescends to help our infirmity; that is, to help us against our infirmity of ignorance, by enlightening us with the light of the living. He it is that discovers to us the spirituality of God's holy law, God's truth and justice, and our sinful and polluted condition, as it respects both our original defilement and actual transgression. As a Spirit of life, He quickens us to feel what He thus discovers to us. Especially He reproves the world of the sin of unbelief. He convinces us of this, when He shows us the fulness, freeness, and all-sufficiency of God's great salvation, His exceeding great and precious promises made in Christ to poor needy sinners, the efficacy of that precious blood which cleanses from all sin, the completeness of that perfect righteousness, which justifies freely from all things from which we could never be justified by the law of Moses, and the suitableness of all this to the wants and necessities of a helpless sinner, who, though he sees it, feels that he is without power to appropriate, apply, and bring home to himself, that which he so much needs. Such a one is now convinced of the sin of unbelief; and feels that he can no more believe for himself, until the spirit of faith is given him, than he can create a world.

Asaph well knew that unbelief was his sinful in-

firmity. He says: 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity.' It is the holy and ever-blessed Spirit who helps us against this infirmity, by enabling us to believe to the eternal salvation of our souls, to believe the exceeding great and precious promises of God, as spoken to us. Hence He is called the Spirit of faith. Paul says: 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.'

We have many other hindrances, many infirmities, that often beset us when we would desire to seek the Lord; as, a body of sin and death, which is a constant clog, ever ready to attract our attention and draw away our minds from that which is spiritual. Even our poor outward man is often an obstacle to our waiting upon God; for we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. There is continually something to engross our attention, so that we too often neglect that which is our highest privilege. Natural sleep was a hindrance to the disciples, so that they could not watch one hour. The Lord said to them: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

'What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy-seat;
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?'

It is the Holy Spirit who helps us against all these, and very many other infirmities, by dwelling in our hearts as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. True, His heavenly and powerful influence may often seem to be suspended, yet He *will* dwell in every consecrated temple of His, according to our Lord's promise: 'He shall abide with you for ever;' to revive, renew, refresh, restore, and carry on His own work.

He helps our infirmities at the throne of grace, by communicating more spiritual life, by giving us a deeper sight and sense of our need of Christ and all His benefits, by preparing our hearts, and furnishing them with fresh desires after God, and by creating the fruit of the lips, filling the mouth with arguments, putting the promises of God into the hand of our faith, and enabling us to plead them before Him, while He assures our hearts that if we ask anything according to the will of God, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

Many petitions are often put up, which are never granted. If there is no warrant for them in His Word, if they are contrary to His will, we need not wonder that they are not answered; indeed, it is a mercy that they are not.

But some poor seeking soul may be ready to say, How can I know that my prayers are according to the will of God?—Observe, that those petitions that are not so, are usually produced by natural feelings alone; they spring from the flesh: as when David besought the Lord for the life of the child. There is

generally much haste and petulance of spirit experienced, as when Rachel said : ' Give me children, or else I die ; ' or as Jonah, who said : ' I do well to be angry, even unto death.' Under such circumstances, the poor, tried, distressed soul cannot leave his concerns in the hand of God, cannot say, ' Thy will be done.' He must have his own will, and scarcely cares what becomes of him, if he cannot obtain it. Now all this is far enough from that violence of which the Saviour speaks, when He says : ' The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

But when the Spirit condescends to help our infirmities in prayer, though there is often much earnestness, and like Jacob, we cannot take a denial, yet is there a measure of submission to the will of God. We are brought to trust in Him, and leave all with Him, as our Father and our Friend. Sometimes, indeed, the heart may be so full of sorrow, that no words are spoken audibly. It is said of Hannah, that she spake in her heart. The very inward desires are sometimes the eloquent language of prayer ; concerning which, one who was deeply acquainted with this spiritual worship, said : ' Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble ; Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear.' Nothing is found but tears, sighs, and groans. And the Lord says : ' For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise.' David expresses it thus : ' Thou tellest my wanderings ; put Thou my tears into Thy bottle : are they not in Thy book ? ' that is, the book of God's remembrance. And thus it is that the Spirit is said to make

intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. No words can express this kind of inward and spiritual communion.

May the good Lord condescend to fulfil in our experience the promise made to His dear Son, and that abundantly: 'I will pour my Spirit upon Thy seed, and my blessing upon Thine offspring.'—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

C.

Cambridge Terrace, March 17, 1871.

The chief of sinners and the least of saints, to all the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane Chapel, wishes grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

In my last letter I was led to treat a little of what Paul says concerning the ever-blessed Spirit helping our infirmities at the throne of grace. I now wish, as the Lord is pleased to enable me, to send you a few more thoughts about the blessed privilege of prayer, granted by God to all His dear children.

Prayer is altogether a spiritual blessing, bestowed by the Almighty upon quickened souls: it is the very breath of the new man. God is the Author of it, Father, Son, and Spirit. It is addressed to Him, as our God and Father, through Christ the Mediator, by the Divine influence and operation of the Holy Ghost, experienced in a sinner's heart. It is that means by which we speak to, and have direct communion with, God Himself. Our only warrant for

prayer is the exceeding great and precious promises contained in God's most holy Word, which He condescends to put into the hand of our faith, that we may plead them before Him ; like Jacob, who said : ' O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.' Also David : ' Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house, be established for ever, and do as Thou hast said.'

Oh ! how sweet it is, when we are in any trouble, to be enabled to bring, as it were, before the Lord His own promise, His own covenant engagement, that which He has told us in secret He will do for us.

All that we ask for at any time must be contained within the compass of the Scriptures ; for we are not warranted to ask for anything that God has not promised. And herein we experience the peculiar favour of the Most High, when He is graciously pleased to apply some suitable promise to our present condition ; for He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind, or meaning, of the Spirit. Such petitions are sure to be answered, sooner or later, in God's way ; but this is not always according to our idea or expectation. God often gives a promise, and then seems to do everything contrary to its fulfilment. This is to try our faith, and to prove His own faithfulness. The various histories contained in the Bible of the experience of the saints of old, are full of this truth. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, indeed, the whole cloud of witnesses, all bear

life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, is the only way of salvation; and think one testimony concerning this. We too, my dear friends, have been often tried in this way. Perhaps God has given us a promise, and then seemed, as it were, to forget it; and we ourselves have often forgotten it, until reminded, by some sharp trial, of what had been spoken to our hearts; like Jacob, to whom God said: 'Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.'

All true prayer must come from the heart; if it does not, it is mere lip-service. None but the needy can pray aright, and who so needy as the children of God? Even in a natural sense, an infant, when it is born into this world, needs everything, and can do nothing for itself. It can only express its general state of need by crying. All persons are needy in a spiritual sense, though they do not know this, nor can they express it, until life is communicated.

There are those who, like the Laodicean church, having only an enlightened understanding, without life, may think that they have need of nothing, and know not that they are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Much Divine truth is often discovered, through the common gifts and illumination of the Spirit, when there is no spiritual life. The difference between light with life, and light without it, is this, that where there is light only, its possessors discern from the Scriptures that  men are sinners, without power to help themselves; and that Christ, through His incarnation,

that if these, and all other scriptural truths, are credited with that faith with which men believe other known truths, all will be right, that they themselves shall be saved.

But where there is life, such persons not only see, but also feel what they believe. If they know that all men are sinners, they feel themselves to be such, through the condemning sentence of God's most holy law, applied with Divine power to their own conscience. And so with all other scripture truths. What they discern, they are brought by little and little to experience and feel. It is by Divine teaching that poor sinners become truly needy.

I dare say that many of you, my dear friends, often feel that you know not what to pray for. So much darkness, coldness, insensibility, and backwardness to all that is good, that there seems to be no inclination or desire to call upon God. There is nothing in which the power of sin and Satan is more successfully displayed, than in keeping poor sinners at a distance from God. Everything within us and around us has a tendency to this. Whatever occupies the thoughts, whether lawful or unlawful, so that God is excluded from them, answers the design of the enemy. There may be much going hither and thither, even when the body is stationary. The mind, in its flight, passes from one thing to another; anything and everything occupies it, rather than the things of God. It is through this, to a very great extent, that our poor needy souls are kept so dry, empty, and barren. We are needy enough, but yet we too often do not seem to feel or know it.

Now, God forbid that we should ever make excuses for ourselves; yet take this for your encouragement. This backwardness to all that is good does not, as formerly, arise from enmity. No, blessed be God! enmity has been subdued; and we often mourn, groan, and cry, on account of our barren condition; but it arises from the flesh, from the power of indwelling sin, from the temptations of Satan, and from the influence exercised by outward objects upon our senses. Our gracious Lord does not, will not, permit our poor backsliding hearts to be altogether disloyal to Him, though we sometimes fear that this is, or will be, our case. How kindly our dear Lord and Saviour spoke to His disciples: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

It may be that there are those who are ready to say, I cannot pray, I know not how or what to ask. —Remember, that most of the prayers contained in Scripture are very short. It is not the length of prayer, but the frequency of it, that discovers our earnestness. If you say, What shall I ask God for? endeavour to look within, and ascertain what you most stand in need of. A person may be poor, in the sense in which the Laodiceans were, but it is the needy, that is, they who both see and feel their need, that are heard and answered. 'The needy shall not alway be forgotten.' 'He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper.' We shall never be earnest in pleading with God, until we feel our need of that which we ask for. Is it more spiritual life that we need?

Then let us ask God for it. The Saviour came into the world that His people might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Remember that we do not ask for life, until we see and feel our need of it : therefore those who ask for spiritual life are not altogether destitute of what they ask for. It is spiritual life that supplies, that fills our whole treasure ; as the Lord says, 'I will fill their treasures : ' that is, with Himself, for He is our whole treasure. Being thus quickened into life, we are encouraged at all times to ask for an increase of it. When the Psalmist prayed: 'Quicken me in Thy way ;' 'Quicken me according to Thy judgment ;' 'Quicken me in Thy righteousness,' he was not dead in sin, for he says: 'This is my comfort in my affliction, for Thy word hath quickened me.' Yet he seemed to himself like one that was dead, forgotten of God, out of mind, his soul cleaving unto the dust. It was in this state that he said, 'Quicken Thou me.' God is so rich in mercy to all that call upon Him, He gives so abundantly, and upbraideth not, that every poor sinner who has life enough to feel his need of life, is encouraged to ask it of God.

I have sometimes found that the publican's prayer, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' was the most suitable petition I could present at the throne of grace. It is short, but very comprehensive, including everything that a poor sinner can possibly need.

Mercy is a peculiar attribute of Jehovah, and is twofold : First, general and universal, extending to all His creatures ; and intends that watchful care and never-failing providence displayed in their pre-

servation and support. Secondly, it is special and peculiar, and is manifested according to the Divine will; as it is written: 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' 'Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.' Now, though the mercy of God is thus sovereign, discriminating, and particular, as to the persons on whom it is bestowed, yet none are discouraged in the Scriptures from seeking it. Mercy necessarily excludes all merit and worthiness on the part of those on whom it is bestowed; for what a person is entitled to, he cannot receive as an effect of mercy. I do not believe that there is any instance of a poor sinner seeking for Divine mercy, from a heartfelt, humbling sight and sense of his need of it, ever having been sent empty away. Our Lord says: 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' The foolish virgins in the parable, when their lamps went out for want of oil, did not go to our Lord for it; but they followed the ironical advice of the other virgins, and went to those who sold it. While they were gone, the Bridegroom came, and it was too late. Others, who came when the Master was risen up, and had shut to the door, with their cry, 'Lord, Lord, open to us,' did not plead for mercy; they only related what great works they had done in His name.

The more we are blessed and favoured by the Lord, the more deeply shall we feel our need of Divine mercy. Regeneration, with all our subsequent revivals, is the effect of discriminating mercy;

as it is written : 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' We constantly need pardoning mercy, renewing mercy, restoring mercy, preserving mercy ; and it is a mercy indeed when the sight and sense of our need of it constrains us to cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

I know that it is easy to utter the words, 'Lord, have mercy upon us : Christ, have mercy upon us : ' but so to feel our need, as to cry to God from our heart for it, is a very different thing. This is the high privilege of poor returning prodigals. And I believe the longer we live, the more we shall see and feel our need of momentary mercy—mercy to save us from sin, to preserve us from danger, to hold our soul in life, and our heart in hope, to supply our various needs, both temporal and spiritual, in a word, to do all for us, and be all to us. This mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him ; nor shall it ever be withdrawn from any that are interested in it.

This may, and will, through Divine grace, supply a perpetual theme, matter for constant prayer : as every display of mercy is new, so every cry for it from the heart will be found to be new also. When our vileness, wants, and necessities, and the Saviour's fulness and all-sufficiency meet together, this will produce confession, supplication, and praise. So that you see, my dear friends, however lame as to

spiritual exercise we may feel ourselves to be, our wants and the Saviour's fulness are, through Divine teaching, sufficient to produce a continual repetition of that cry from our hearts: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Nor do I believe that we shall ever get beyond this while we are in the body; nor do I wish it. I believe that no real communion and fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit, can be maintained and kept alive without it. It is God's prerogative to give, and it is our privilege to receive; as it is written: 'Of His fulness' (i. e. the Saviour's) 'have all we received, and grace for grace.' Paul found that this grace was sufficient for him, and so shall we too.

The cruse is empty, and therefore I add no more, but the expression of my earnest desire that it may please the God of all grace, and the Father of all mercy, to own, honour, and bless what is written, to the comfort, refreshment, and encouragement of those who read and hear it.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

CI.

Cambridge Terrace, March 24, 1871.

My dear Friends,—In my last letters I have been led to treat a little of the blessed privilege of prayer. Our Lord spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke xviii. 1.) The *men* intended, are described in the 7th verse, as God's elect. The manner or form of their prayer is, crying to God, and is said to be day and night.

I have spoken somewhat before of the hindrances

and helps we meet with, in approaching the throne of grace. Prayer, as I have said, is the very breath of the life of the new man. It is self and Satan who are opposed to it, and it is the holy and ever-blessed Spirit who helps us against our infirmities, and gives us the very desire to be found in the use of it. Nothing but being kept poor and needy in spirit will produce diligence therein; and it is the diligent soul that is made fat. It is a principal means whereby we abide in the faith and love of the Saviour, as living branches in the true and living vine; and if we are blessed with this privilege, we shall be sure to meet with much purging. The Saviour says: 'Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He' (the Father) 'purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.'

But to proceed with our wants, spoken of in the last letter. Our Lord says: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' So that we are encouraged to ask God for an increased outpouring of the Spirit in our hearts. There are different degrees, as to the measure of the Spirit granted at different seasons of the church's history, and at different periods in each believer's experience. Like all the gifts of God, that precious gift originates with Himself, and is bestowed before we ask it of Him. It was given to Christ, and to all His spiritual seed in Him, in the covenant of grace from everlasting, and is received in time by each member of His mystical body, at the

appointed season to favour Zion. One of the first effects of this reception of the Spirit is, His putting a cry into the heart of a poor sinner for more of that spiritual life, light, and power he has already experienced. So that He first comes uninvited by us, and then helps our infirmities to pray according to God's will.

That the Apostles were made partakers of the Spirit of God when the Saviour first called them to follow Him, is plain; though He afterwards told them that He would pray the Father for them, that He would send them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth: 'Whom,' said He, 'the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.' Again, after His resurrection, He breathed on them, and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Further, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father; which means the gift of the Spirit. This agrees with John vii. 37-39, where He says: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.'

The more a poor thirsty soul is favoured to drink of the pure river of the water of life, the more intense will be his thirst for spiritual things. It is when God withholds the light of His countenance, and we are at a distance from Him; when we walk in darkness, and have no bright shining; when,

through carnal-mindedness, unbelief, the motions of sin, the allurements of the world, the temptations of Satan, and that natural proneness, which I believe all God's dear children are exercised with, to depart from Him, we have lost sight of Him, and lost almost all desire after Him, it is then that we have little or no thirst for the things that accompany salvation. At such seasons (and they are but too frequent) we scarcely know whereabouts we are, whether we are after the flesh or after the Spirit; 'for to be carnally minded is death, but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace.' And thus will it be found, that if we are kept sensible of our need of fresh supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will furnish us with further matter for prayer, in addition to the cry spoken of in the former letter: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

Those who are poor in pocket, as well as poor in spirit, are directed by our Lord to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, because this is the most important matter. Not that temporal things are to be forgotten, for He is so bountiful, that He promises they shall be added. But more of this by and bye.

It is the kingdom of God and His righteousness that we are to seek first; and when faith is in exercise, and the love of God is enjoyed in the heart, this will be our practice; but when at a distance from Him through unbelief, the world and its concerns will claim our attention. Now, as all real religion is personal, we are to understand by 'the kingdom of God,' first, the reign of

Divine grace in our own hearts. For the Saviour says: 'The kingdom of God is within you;' and Paul says, it is 'not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

Feeling ourselves unrighteous by nature and practice, we are brought to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and are constrained to ask it of God as a gift. We are said to receive 'abundance of grace, and of *the gift* of righteousness.' And when, through faith, we are led to trust to Christ alone for righteousness (having none of our own), for justification and acceptance before God, and when the pardon of sin subdues the love of it, this branch of the kingdom of God is established within us. It is the reign of God's grace over our sin. This we are encouraged to ask for.

Peace is the next thing. By nature we are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest; and 'there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' When under the guilt of sin, and the condemning sentence of a broken law, there can be no peace within. God's wrath revealed against sin, discovers and stirs up our carnal enmity against Him. But when the atonement is received by faith, and applied to the conscience by the teaching of the Spirit, wrath flows out of the heart, and Divine love flows in, and takes possession of it. Then we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The work of righteousness is *found* to be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. Now the peace of God rules ~~within~~. It is a branch of God's kingdom, or of

the reign of Divine grace within us: nor is there anything in which sin and Satan labour more, than to interrupt this blessed, this heavenly tranquillity of soul. Destroy it finally they never can; but often, too often, is it interrupted by the workings of a carnal mind and by unbelief.

The next thing is joy in the Holy Ghost. The Lord's dear people have abundant *cause* for rejoicing; as the Apostle says: 'Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice.' But alas! how little of this do we experience. The Saviour tells us to rejoice because our names are written in heaven. The Church of old said, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,' &c. But when and where can we find this overflowing of Divine joy? Perhaps each of us will be ready to say, I am afraid it is not in me. There is much more sorrow than joy, much more anger than love, much more unbelief than faith; and so in respect of all the corruptions of our poor fallen nature." But let us remember it is the joy of the *Holy Ghost* that is spoken of; and Christ Himself, though proverbially a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and I do not know that it is ever said of Him that He laughed, yet rejoiced in spirit. And, bless His name! we too can sometimes rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The joy of the *Lord* is our strength, and indeed it is much more inward than outward.

Besides, remember, it is a *conflict* we are now

engaged in ; and though the victory is sure, and the triumph certain, we are not yet put in possession of it ; it must be waited for : and both faith and patience are the gifts of God. Grace must triumph, because it is grace. Now, it is our blessed privilege to seek for all these things ; and if we feel our need of them, we shall indeed be constrained at times to ask God for them. The Lord grant that this asking may be frequent, diligent, and fervent.

‘The kingdom of God’ also signifies the reign of Divine grace in the church ; the outward administration of the Saviour’s kingdom among men, by the display of His almighty power, through the word of His grace, the Scriptures of truth, the ordinances of His house, and the work of His Spirit, making all effectual, according to the will and purpose of Jehovah. This we are encouraged to pray for ; to say, ‘Thy kingdom come ;’ to ask that sinners, both nigh and far off, at home and abroad, may hear the voice of the Son of God and live. For all men must, sooner or later, yield obedience to His peaceful sceptre, or bow beneath His iron rod. ‘He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.’

These blessed realities may well furnish us poor barren, empty, helpless sinners with abundant matter for earnest prayer and supplication ; and yet I know that we shall be as dead and unmoved as the ground on which we stand, unless quickened, renewed, revived, and restored by Him who saith :

‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.’

The next thing that I would mention, as supplying us with matter for prayer, is what James speaks of when he says: ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.’ And I believe all who are truly taught of God will find that they know not what they should pray for as they ought. The natural pride of man’s heart will resist this humbling lesson. It is no small mercy when a poor sinner is made to become a fool, that he may be wise. God’s own sent servants in the ministry know not what they should pray for, or what they should preach, but as they are furnished from above. You may indeed sometimes find men, who, while they would be ashamed to own that they think anything of themselves, yet manifest in their preaching that they are not quite fools. This is discovered by the hearers more by feeling than by anything that is spoken. If the spirit of pride or self-sufficiency is suffered to work in the preacher’s heart, it will be sure to communicate itself to the hearers more or less. Those who are of a broken heart and contrite spirit cannot receive it; but those who stand high in their own esteem will delight in it, and say, What a bold, faithful, decided man he is!

But to return. We poor, needy, helpless ones are encouraged to ask our heavenly Father for whatsoever we have need of, whether temporal or spiritual. Almost all those who came to our Lord in the days

of His flesh, came about some bodily infirmity, either for themselves or others. I need not stay to produce instances ; only, bless His precious name ! none were sent empty away. How did He manifest His tender care, in feeding multitudes when they were in want. And this was displayed even from the beginning ; for when the Lord clothed our first parents with the skins of beasts, which not only remotely represented the best robe, but were literal clothing, He showed His regard not only for the souls, but also for the bodies of His dear people. The garments of the children of Israel, though worn in the wilderness for forty years, did not wax old. We are told that when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel ; and Himself has been our dwelling-place in all generations : so that He provides house, clothing, and food, for His family. Furthermore, the silver is His, and the gold is His ; so that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it. Well might the Saviour say : ‘ Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.’ And Paul says : ‘ My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.’ Now, as most of us are needy enough, here is abundant encouragement to ask for whatsoever we need, whether spiritual or temporal.

One branch of that wisdom which cometh from above, consists in our being led by the Spirit of God

to ask for those things which we need, in faith, and according to the will of God. All this we must receive from Him, for I am sure we do not possess it in or of ourselves. The saints of old used to ask God what they should do, and where they should go ; as David : ‘ Shall I pursue after this troop ? Shall I overtake them ? ’ It shows spiritual declension when we think that we can undertake a very small matter without asking counsel of God. Witness the children of Israel, when they made a covenant with the Gibeonites. Nothing can be too small a matter for us to bring before God. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without Him ; and, bless His precious name ! nothing is too great for Him to manage for us. It is a sad state to get into, when we suppose that we can do anything without Him. This may not be spoken in so many words, but our almost constant neglecting of Him in what appear to be but small affairs, shows that a spirit of pride and independence is secretly working in us. He says : ‘ In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.’ One of the Saviour’s names is ‘ Counsellor,’ and it is our privilege continually to ask counsel of Him ; and it is the prerogative of the Spirit to lead and guide us into all truth.

Thus you see, my dear friends, there is abundant matter for us to be continually bringing before the Lord. Paul says : ‘ Pray without ceasing.’ May the Lord condescend to work in us abundantly both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

CII.

Cambridge Terrace, March 26, 1871.

My dear Friends,—Hoping that if it be the will of God, I may be with you on Lord's Day morning*, as I earnestly desire once more to break bread amongst you, in commemoration of the dying love of our dear and adorable Saviour, and wishing to say more to you than I shall probably be able to speak, I am obliged to continue my former method of writing.

You know the Apostle says : ' We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' And again : ' Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.' Though this was addressed to particular churches, yet it is not limited to them, but applies to the whole church in all places, from the beginning to the end of time. We are too apt to fall into a mistake in thinking and speaking of the church of Christ, as though that particular body to which we belong were alone intended. It is our privilege to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, and to seek for those scriptural marks in others whereby the true members of the church are distinguished from the world. Wherever these marks are found, such are the body of Christ, and members one of another.

This expresses a twofold relation : first, between Christ and His church ; and secondly, between the individual members, as members one of another.

First, Christ is the Head, and the church is His body. This is by covenant union, according to the

* This desire was not granted.

purpose of God, who chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, blessed us in Christ with all spiritual blessings, and saved us in Him with an everlasting salvation. It is by union and communion of natures. Christ has a human body, prepared for Him by the Father; as it is written: 'A body hast Thou prepared me.' And it is said: 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' But this is not the body of which I wish to speak.

The Saviour has also a mystical body, which body is His church. This is, as I said, by communion of natures. And as the body He assumed was prepared by God, so this mystical body, consisting of His family, is also prepared and made ready by Him and for Him: 'This people have I formed for myself.' He took the children's flesh and blood into union with His own Divine Person: 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.' Thus our nature became His. And He gives us His Spirit; for, 'They that are joined to the Lord are one spirit.' They not only receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, with which He is anointed, but Himself dwells in them by faith, and is formed in their hearts the hope of eternal glory; as He says: 'I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one.' This mystical union is far above all human apprehension and comprehension; nor will any language ever fully express it. It is matter of faith and experience. It is a perfect *oneness*, as the Saviour says: 'At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.'

There are several metaphors by which this union

or oneness is expressed in Scripture : as that of a building and its foundation : 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.'

Again : a vine and its branches are one. So is the human body, consisting of a head and many members. But all these fall short of exhibiting perfectly that blessed, that close, that intimate union and communion which subsist between Christ and His church.

The figure which most fully expresses the union of which we speak, is that of a man and his wife. Writing on this subject, Paul says : 'This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.' But even this does not completely represent that union and communion in which the Saviour and His Church are one : for though the husband and wife are one flesh, yet they are not one person : and where the most close and intimate union subsists, there are yet many things in which they must necessarily differ. But not so with Christ and His Church. They are one, completely one. Of course I do not mean that He gives His Godhead to His Church, or that He makes her Divine ; for I speak of the Saviour, not as He is absolutely God only, but as He is the Christ of God. He has given Himself to, and for, His Church, in such a sense as to make her one with Himself.

If the church is set forth as a mystical body, He is the Head of that body, as its Superior, to govern and rule it. He is a Head of influence to it, communicating Himself and His grace to it, to guide and direct it: 'And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.' As a Head, He represents His Church, and ever appears in the presence of God for her, to make intercession for her. And whatsoever is done to His Church in this world, whether good or evil, He accounts as done to Himself, because He and His bride are but one.

He is the life of the church; for as the human body has no life in itself, (for the body without the spirit is dead,) so the church has no life but Christ. He is the Life—the Resurrection and the Life; and Paul says: 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear,' &c.

What is spoken of the whole church, is equally applicable to every member of it. Every poor sinner who is taught of God, and made acquainted with God's great salvation, learns by experience that all real religion begins, is carried on, and must be perfected, by Christ. Some are apt to think, that to grow in religion consists in having the understanding informed and the mind enlarged, and in the attainment of those things which are highly esteemed among men; as, an outward show of piety, the performance of many things that are useful to others, and the like. But those who, through Divine grace, are made one with Christ, are brought to know that all growth in grace consists in conformity to the Saviour's image, in being made like Him. Hence the privilege, under all circumstances, whether adverse

or prosperous, of searching the Word of God, to see whether we can find that the Saviour passed through the same ; and of looking within, to find out whether Christ is in our hearts, affections, desires, and thoughts.

Alas ! I fear that most of us (at least I must speak for myself) will be continually discovering that there is but little, very little, of the Saviour to be found in us. Self seems but too often to predominate. And yet, blessed be God ! there is, as it were, a secret link, an inward tie, that holds us to the Saviour ; we cannot let Him go, or give Him up altogether. Depend upon it, it is His love to us, and not our love to Him, that keeps us together : the power, the truth, the faithfulness, is all in Himself, and from Himself. But then, bless His holy name ! as we are one with Him, we share in His grace ; it is *His grace* that is sufficient for us, and *His strength* that is made perfect in our weakness. He will not live alone, nor reign alone, without us. We are continually prone to depart from Him, and sin and death often threaten to separate us from Him ; but it is His love that holds us fast, it is His love that is put into our hearts. And as all power in heaven and earth is His, and He is supreme in everything, His Church also must share with Him, because He and she are one ; and the effect of Divine grace is intended finally to banish every shade of difference between Him and us.

But this is a progressive work. The beginning of it consists in His giving us life and light : then by little and little subduing our stubborn will, and

conforming it, in some measure, to His own. By regeneration He renews us in the spirit of our mind, whereby we receive something of the mind of Christ. By purging our conscience from the guilt of sin, and revealing His righteousness to faith, He makes us meet for Himself. By death He will finally destroy the old man of sin; and at the resurrection, He will change these poor vile bodies of ours, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then there will be a perfect conformity between Him and His Church; for she shall see Him as He is, and be like Him. This was the grand design of Jehovah from everlasting, namely, the display of all His glorious attributes, by a perfect union and complete conformity between Christ and His Church.

Secondly: We come to the consideration of the relation which all the members of Christ's church have one to another. For we are the body of Christ, and members one of another. This membership expresses, first, unity: 'There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;' secondly, equality: 'Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.'

This union is not natural, or temporal, but it is spiritual. It does not interfere with, or destroy, the various positions in life in which God's providence has placed men. Hence the many exhortations in the Word of God; such as: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.' The natural relationship between the different classes of mankind, of parents and children, masters and servants, &c., is not altered by that spiritual oneness and equality of which we

are treating. The foundation of our union one to another, as members of the mystical body of Christ, is, our personal union to Him, as our Head. We must be made partakers of Christ, or we cannot be members of His mystical body, or of one another. The Apostle says: 'By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.' This cannot intend water-baptism, whether adult or infant, for many have partaken of that ordinance, who were never made members of the mystical body of Christ. Paul tells us there is one body and one Spirit, one baptism, &c. This is the baptism of the Spirit; for John said to those who came to his baptism: 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' Some good men have supposed that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is to be limited to His miraculous outpouring and gifts; but I think this cannot be the true sense, because all that are baptized by the Spirit into the mystical body of Christ, are by no means made partakers of the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. No: the one baptism is the baptism of the Spirit; and of this every member of the body of Christ is a partaker. It is by this that they all have an interest in, and fellowship with, the Head, and with one another. It makes them all one in Him.

It is said that they are members one of another; and so indeed they are, when in their right mind:

for, 'If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' Whatever concerns one member should, as far as it is known, interest the whole body.

Now, as each member is placed in the body according to the will and appointment of God, it is both the duty and privilege of every one of us humbly to inquire what is our own individual position in the body: for all the members are necessary to it, consequently each has its own peculiar use. One may be called a foot, another an eye, and another a hand. These are not all of the same use, but are all necessary to the body; and, as I said, it becomes each one of us first to seek to know and be assured that we are *of* the body, and secondly, to ascertain what is our own peculiar position in it.

There is, first, a *general* use of all the members, expressed in the following words: 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' This is done by pleading for each other at the throne of grace; by sympathizing and taking part in the sorrows and joys of each other; and by affording whatever assistance God enables us unto, whether by hearty counsel, advice, exhortation, or instruction, as may be. Whatever temporal difference may exist among the members of Christ, they are all, or should be, one in Him; flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, having His mind, and being anointed with His Spirit. This will make us both experimentally and practically members one of another. It is the most close, the most sweet, the most intimate union and communion that can possibly be known. It is much

nearer than any natural relationship in the world. Our Lord sets it forth in the answer He gave to those who told Him that His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Jesus stretched forth His hand to His disciples, and said : ' Behold my mother and my brethren ! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' This is not intended to interfere with natural relationship, but it is as much *above* it, as heaven is above the earth. One flesh, one body, one spirit : ' For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' With Him one, and one with one another.

Christ, as to His person in a mystical sense, could not be complete, if one member were wanting ; as the human body is incomplete, when one member is lacking. This shows us how deeply we are, or should be, interested in one another. It is the love of Christ in each of our hearts that is the bond of all spiritual union and perfectness. This love, though its existence in our hearts is a secret between the Saviour and ourselves, yet must, if it does exist, be openly shown, sooner or later, more or less.

I would desire to impress upon myself, and upon every one of you, my dear friends, the use of that blessed privilege, self-examination, as to these matters.

Secondly : Each member has its *special* use in the body. May each of us be enabled to be constantly inquiring of God what we are called unto, what He has appointed for us ; to say with Paul : ' Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ' David says : ' Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.' First, to know

the will of God concerning ourselves ; secondly, to be made willing to do it ; thirdly, to have grace enabling us thereunto, is a high privilege indeed, and should be earnestly sought for. It is by such means that God is graciously pleased to make it manifest to ourselves, to the church, and openly to the world, that we are members one of another. The Saviour says : ‘ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ The Gentile world used to say of the primitive martyrs : ‘ See how these Christians love one another !’ I fear that the accusation brought against the church of Ephesus is but too applicable to the church of the present day : ‘ I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.’

May the dear Lord in mercy condescend to bestow upon us this repentance, and revive His work in us and amongst us, and that in respect of His *whole* church, of *all* who are members of His body, and of one another ; for if these things be in us and abound, they make us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and thus to know Him, is to be like Him. Empty, speculative knowledge of the Word of God only puffs up ; but the Saviour says : ‘ This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’ It is only by an experimental knowledge of Christ that we are changed into His image. That this may be our blessed

privilege, is the earnest desire of—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

CIII.

Cambridge Terrace, April 7, 1871.

My dear Friends,—I have been meditating a little on what Paul says in Colossians iii. 4 : ‘When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.’

First, about Christ our life. It is God, and only God, who can say : ‘I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.’ It is His peculiar prerogative to be underived, self-existent, and independent. With Him is the fountain of life ; therefore all living beings derive their life and existence from Him. Christ is the true God, and eternal life ; therefore He is said in the text to be our life, that is, the life of His saints, in a peculiar and special sense.

At the creation, all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. He gave to every living creature a life suitable to it ; but of man it is said that the Lord God formed him of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Life was given him in a threefold sense : first, the life of the outward man, possessed by its union with the soul, which soul is an immortal principle, and then that spiritual life which was a chief feature of the image of God, in which Adam was created. He was told by God Himself that in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit, he should surely die. Now, though Adam by transgression became legally subject to death, the sentence

was not literally executed upon him the same day in which he sinned ; nor does the soul of man cease to exist, or die in a literal sense. But, as God's word cannot be broken, it necessarily follows that Adam died in a spiritual sense. He became dead to God ; and as all the children of Adam were in him as their covenant head, and all derived their being from him, all are born dead in trespasses and sins.

If it is inquired, how this spiritual death is manifested, I answer, We trace it in Adam, who, before he had sinned, enjoyed perfect familiarity with his Maker, and had a clear and spiritual apprehension of God, of himself, and of the world in which God had placed him. He knew God as his God, gave proper names to all the creatures, and at once recognized Eve when God brought her to him, and predicted that a man and his wife should be one flesh. He had no dread or slavish fear of his Maker, nor of anything else. Fear never possessed his mind, until he had sinned ; and then that glorious Being by whom he was created, and with whom he was in spiritual union, became the first and chief object of his dread. For when God called to him : ' Adam, where art thou ? ' he said, ' I heard Thy voice, and was afraid, and I hid myself, because I was naked.' And ever since, all the human family have been subject to this fear, whenever God has been pleased to make a display of Himself, of His almighty power, holiness, justice, righteousness, and immutability, to them. Witness this in the case of Israel. When God descended in fire upon Mount Sinai, they stood afar off, were afraid of His presence, and intreated that they might never hear the same terrible voice of the law

again. When the Lord Jesus manifested Himself to Saul on his way to Damascus, he fell to the ground, trembled, and was astonished. And who is there amongst us, who has not trembled at the apprehension of death? This proves that all are by nature estranged from God, dead to Him, unacquainted with Him, and far from Him by wicked works; nor can any ever live to God, but in, through, and by, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our life.

As He is the true God, all life is His. But He says: 'As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He *given* to the Son to have life in Himself.' This cannot respect His Divine Person absolutely, for as God He can receive nothing; but as God-man, Mediator, Emmanuel, God with us, or God in our nature, it pleased the Father that in Him should dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. As the eternal God, He could lose nothing by taking the children's flesh and blood into union with Himself. Thus He has life *in Himself*; for His Godhead and manhood together is Himself.

Now, it is by union with Him as a living Head, that we all partake of His life, or live in Him, and He in us. Being made flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, we can no more die again to God than He can; for He says: 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' As He lives for ever, (which living does not intend mere existence, but a spiritual living to God,) so also shall all His covenant family live for ever with Him. Thus, He not only gives us life, but is Himself our life, which life is neither the **natural** life of the body, nor the immortality of the

soul. For those who go out of this world dead in trespasses and sins possess this. Devils and wicked men must be turned into hell, and must live for ever, but in a state of final separation from God, and are consequently dead to Him for ever. But that life of which we are treating, of which it is said, Christ is our life, is perfectly distinct from every quality, principle, and faculty possessed by man in his natural state.

We will now, the Lord enabling us, humbly inquire how Christ is our life. It is, first, by the appointment of God. 'I will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people:' which covenant is a covenant of life and peace. Eternal life is the chief blessing of the covenant; and Christ is both the one and the other, as He is the sum and substance of the covenant, the true God and eternal life.

Secondly, He is our life, by His removing and taking away the meritorious cause of death, that is, sin: 'For the wages of sin is death.' This He did, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

The sentence of the law against the transgressors of it, was death, eternal death. Now, the blood is the life of man: and when the Saviour shed His precious blood on Calvary, He made a full atonement for sin, satisfied Divine justice, and for ever appeased the vindictive wrath of the justly-offended Majesty of heaven. The Saviour poured out His soul unto death. He made His soul an offering for sin. He gave body for body, soul for soul, and life for life.

Thirdly, He is our life, by His own resurrection from the dead. As He was delivered for our offences, so was He raised again for our justification. It was impossible that His pure and spotless nature could be holden of death, or see corruption. When He said, 'It is finished!' bowed His sacred head, and gave up the ghost, He freed us as debtors, and Himself as our Surety, from all future demands of law and justice. He put *away* sin, so that it shall never be imputed to those of whom it is said that Christ is their life.

Fourthly, He is our life, inasmuch as He is gone into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. God beholds all His family as represented by Him, the living Head; and has determined that they shall all be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; that He might have all the honour, praise, and glory, of reconciling and bringing together a just and holy God, and poor, lost, ruined, undone sinners.

I now proceed to show the method by which God teaches us that Christ is our life. This is by giving us a saving knowledge of the Father and the Son: 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' This knowledge is far above that which Adam possessed in his state of innocence. He was created in the image of his Maker, knew Him as his Creator, had communion and fellowship with Him, was spiritually-minded, and possessed of righteousness and true holiness; but he did not know Him as a Saviour and Redeemer. This knowledge is peculiar to His blood-



bought family ; as Paul says : ' That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.'

This knowledge is conveyed to us by the display of a quickening or life-giving power ; which quickening is ascribed in Scripture to Father, Son, and Spirit : ' As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.' And : ' It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing.' The means through which this power is usually exerted, is the Word : ' Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth.' It is the Saviour's voice that is heard by His lost sheep : ' Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' And the Church says : ' It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh.' By this knocking is intended the first calls heard by the poor sinner ; that secret engaging of his attention, expressed by ' Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear,' accompanied by some deep concern about his eternal state. This he usually endeavours to put away from him, if he can. He is unwilling to have his carnal peace of mind interrupted by such gloomy meditations. But the Saviour goes on knocking, until, as in the case of Lydia, He opens the heart, so that the hearer is constrained to attend to the things that are spoken. This is hearing the Shepherd's voice. The power that accompanies it enables the seeking soul to distinguish it from every other voice ; and as the good Lord condescends to carry on this His own saving work in the heart, by applying the promises and revealing Him-

self little by little as a Saviour, this voice becomes more and more sweet, until, as the Church says, His voice is found to be *most* sweet. Nothing so precious to a seeking soul as an encouraging word spoken by the Saviour to him.

Christ is our life, by virtue of our union to Him. Paul tells us how Christ was his life experimentally. He says: 'I am crucified with Christ;' that is, when Christ died for him, he also died with Him in a legal and covenant sense: and by experimental conformity to Christ, he died daily; for, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.' But though thus dead, he says: 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Now, if Christ lived in Paul, Christ was his life. Christ dwelt in his heart by faith. Through believing in Christ, (of which faith the Saviour is both the author and finisher,) Paul experienced such a realization of the presence of Christ, as swallowed up everything else. Faith was the substance of things hoped for; the evidence, ground, or confidence, of things not seen. Christ was his All in all.

This is God's mystery among the Gentiles, Christ in them, the hope of glory. Hope, as well as faith, affords a present realization of Christ. He is the substance, the very essence of every grace, or fruit, of the Spirit, produced in our hearts; so that there is no spiritual life separate from Christ.

This life is a hidden life: 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' Hidden, as to the production of it. It is often begun in a poor sinner's soul before he is aware of what God is doing in him and for him. An

unsettled state of mind, conviction of sin, dissatisfaction with everything around him, and more especially with himself, all this, he thinks, must end in eternal ruin; and that more particularly when the sentence of the law is applied to his conscience, guilt stares him in the face, and the wrath of God against sin works within him. Now he begins to think that his doom is finally sealed, that there is, and can be, no hope for such a sinner. Frequently his natural spirits flag altogether, his bodily health sinks, and he supposes himself to be the most miserable of beings. Yet there is life in all this. 'Reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' But this is a secret, until God condescends to reveal it, by raising the poor sinner to a little hope in His mercy, and by drawing out the desires of the soul to Himself. Now the poor creature begins to pour out his heart in secret before the Lord, and is quite astonished to find that his prayer is not rejected. He gets encouragement and relief, and is really enabled at times to cast his burden upon the Lord. Thus, that which he thought must end in eternal death, he finds to be the moving of spiritual life in his soul. All this may for a long time be hid from those in whom it is produced; and it is not understood till God is pleased to shine upon His own work. This is what Solomon means when he says: 'Get wisdom,' that is, Christ; 'and with all thy getting get understanding;' by which is intended a spiritual knowledge of what God has done for the soul.

Again: 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' A Trinity of Persons in the Unity of one God is the

greatest of all mysteries ever proclaimed from heaven. 'There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One.' To understand this, surpasses the utmost stretch of human comprehension. It is matter of faith. We know it is true : God hath said it.

When Christ appeared on the earth, all who were without Divine teaching saw nothing but the manhood in His glorious Person ; but John, being taught of God, could say : 'We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' As Christ was unknown to those who beheld Him only with their natural sight, so is He unknown as He dwells in His people, as He is their life and the length of their days. Every spiritual motion, sensation, operation, and experience, enjoyed in the souls of His redeemed family, is produced by Himself, who is their life, and is altogether unknown to, and hidden from, all others.

It is a secret life of which we speak, with respect to the means by which it is sustained. The Saviour told His disciples : 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' And, bless His precious name ! we also have meat and drink which the unregenerate world do not, cannot, partake of. He says : 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' This is not received, as the Papists will have it, in a carnal sense, neither does it stand in receiving bread and wine only. These are the signs, but Himself is the substance. We receive Him, feed upon Him, live in Him, and He in us, by a true and lively faith. 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he

that believeth on me shall never thirst.' This living in Christ, and Christ in us, as Paul says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' is a hidden life. It is part of that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him, and with them only. May He condescend, my dear friends, to bless you and me with an increase of it.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

CIV.

Cambridge Terrace, April 14, 1871.

To the little Flock assembling for the worship of God at Staining Lane.—I once more address you by letter in the name of the Lord. Remember what He has said: 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' I wish all my dear brethren and sisters in Christ could think of me as I am constrained to think of myself; that I am a mere instrument in the hand of a gracious God; that He has been pleased to make use of me for a time, to communicate spiritual benefit to some of His dear children; that He has now seen good to lay me aside, for how long I know not; nor do I know whether He will again condescend to enable me to tell you about what He has done for my soul. I shall rejoice if He is pleased to speak to you again by me, His unworthy servant. All that I can discover of His will at present, is, that I should thus communicate to you by letter a little of that meditation which my kind Lord and Master is pleased at times to favour me with.

In my last, I was led to treat a little of what Paul

says : 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.' I have endeavoured to show you that Christ is the life of all His saints, and that it is a hidden life.

Furthermore, as *spiritual* life is intended, it is a secret or hidden life in respect of the safety and security of it. Christ, who is our life, was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, in His sovereign decree, in His everlasting love, and in the covenant of grace, which is ordered in all things and sure. And all His family are alike included in the secret purpose of God, loved with the same hidden, secret love, wherewith He loved His dear Son. 'Father,' said He, 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' And in the same chapter : 'Thou hast loved them' (speaking of His disciples) 'as Thou hast loved me.'

In league with Satan, we have through sin done all that we might to separate ourselves from this everlasting love ; but, blessed be God ! nothing shall, or can, prevail to do this ; no, not even sin and death. Paul says that neither death nor life shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Every *natural* relationship is dissolved by death ; but this oneness with Christ, this relation to God as a Father, shall never, never cease.

'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.' All that has ever taken place in this world has been for the elect's sake. Everything concerning them is appointed in God's eternal purpose. There was a time,

called in Scripture 'the fulness of time,' when God sent forth His Son, made of a woman; and there is a time for every one of His covenant seed to be born into this world naturally, and a time for them to die. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, the number of their days is with Him. There is also a time for each one of them to be born again, a time to favour Zion; yea, the set time shall surely come. And it is very beautiful and interesting, when the Lord sometimes graciously enables us to trace through the Scriptures of Divine truth those wonderful ways of His, in which He accomplished the purposes of His love concerning His dear children, by the mysterious working of His providence. This is a very profitable subject for meditation, when the Lord is pleased to lead our minds to it.

When God called Abraham to go forth into a land that he should afterwards receive as an inheritance, by faith he obeyed, not knowing whither he went. God's design in this call was hid from him. Jacob knew nothing of God's purpose concerning him, when he was compelled to go to Padan-aram for fear of his brother Esau. How he afterwards admired the secret providence of God, when he said: 'With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' What a mysterious and wonderful history is presented to us in the life of Joseph. All was darkness and obscurity, secret and hid, until God was pleased to shine upon His own work, and discover those depths of Divine wisdom, mercy, love, grace, and favour, which could never have been known by any other means. The history

of Moses, his miraculous preservation at his birth, first from the decree of Pharaoh, and then from drowning, shows how his life was hid with Christ in God.

Look at the children of Israel, threatened with destruction by the Egyptians, the Red Sea before them, and inaccessible mountains on either side of them, so that there was no human possibility of their escape. Yet God led them on safely, notwithstanding all. They were preserved in the wilderness, when they did not know one step of the way they were to go, had daily bread sent them from heaven, and drank of a fountain unknown to others. We are told that they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.

Now, all this is peculiar to the whole Israel of God. And why? Because their life is hid with Christ in God; hid in such a way that nothing shall ever destroy it. And when we are favoured in any measure to trace out in our own experience that which is written concerning the saints of old, we find it sweet and profitable to remember all the way in which the Lord our God has led us in this wilderness, to humble us, and to prove us, and to make us know what is in our hearts; and that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. A hidden, or secret life requires secret food.

But this life is hid with Christ, and in Christ, as He is our hiding-place from the windy storm and tempest. Divine wrath shall never overwhelm us, for Christ



has appeased it, having made peace for us by the blood of His cross. The sword of Divine justice will never reach or cut us off. That has been sheathed in the precious body and soul of the Man, Jehovah's Fellow. Its burning flame is for ever quenched by that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin. We may be deprived of natural life by various causes, yet are they all under the control of God's will and power. The Saviour said to His disciples: 'Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.' Even this, nothing can do without Divine permission. But spiritual life, that life of ours which is hid with Christ in God, is beyond the reach of all creature agency.

I believe that the Lord's people have often many fears about it. When God's presence is withheld, when there is little or no communion and fellowship with Him; when, like Zion of old, we say, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me;' when our inward enemies are strong and lively, when fiery darts of fierce temptation from Satan are continually hurled at us, when there is a deep sight and sense of the power of indwelling sin, and when no answers to prayer are obtained; when all this, and much more, seems ready to overwhelm us, we look, but appear to look in vain, for the wellspring of life within. This may indeed be hid from us for a time; but God will, as in the case of David, and indeed of all His tried family, restore to us the joy of His salvation, shine again upon His own work, and give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Our life is so hid with Christ in God, that nothing can ever reach it, so as to deprive us of it. A soul that is really in earnest in seeking after Christ, can never be satisfied without this Divine life within. David said : ' This is my comfort in my affliction, for Thy word hath quickened me.' Without life, there can be no spiritual appetite, no secret delighting in God and His ways, no communion and fellowship with Him, no enjoyment of His presence, either in reading, meditation, prayer, or the ordinances of His house, no true love to the brethren ; in a word, no real religion. Therefore it is profitable to be frequently meditating on the quickening operations of the Spirit of God in our own souls. In whomsoever this life can be traced, whatever may be the fears, doubts, and misgivings of heart, it is secure, as the gift of God, as a blessing of the covenant, as a fruit of the redemption of Christ, and as an effect of the indwelling of His Spirit. It is as certain and sure as Christ Himself is sure ; for He says : ' Because I live, ye shall live also.'

But the mere knowledge of this truth will not satisfy a living soul. It wants to be continually receiving of the Saviour's fulness, and grace for grace. But whether this is enjoyed or withheld, still, ' Your life is hid with Christ in God,' as the poet says, ' Beyond the reach of harm.' Safe in His almighty hands, temporal death cannot deprive us of it. The Saviour said to the dying thief, ' This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' For though death separated the soul and body of the Saviour (but that only for a short time), it never dissolved

the union between His Godhead and manhood. He was the Resurrection and the Life, even when He died on the cross. His death was a voluntary act. As God, He laid down His life (which intends His humanity), and as God, He took it again. Now in Him, with Him, through Him, and by Him, there is eternal security for the life of all His saints.

‘When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.’

Though our life is now hid with Christ in God, yet the Saviour has often manifested Himself to His covenant family; but not in the sense, not in that full manner, expressed in the text. He was manifested to Adam after the fall, as his Judge; in the first promise, as the Seed of the woman to bruise the serpent’s head; and as the Lord his Righteousness, when He clothed him and his wife with coats of skins. Abel saw Him, when by faith he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. He was represented to Noah by the ark, in which both he and his family were saved from the deluge. Abraham saw Him in the ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and which he offered in sacrifice in the stead of his son Isaac; and proclaimed Him as Jehovah-jireh. Jacob saw Him when going to Padan-aram, as a ladder uniting heaven and earth, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. He saw Him again as God and Man, as the Angel of the covenant, when he wrestled and prevailed. In dying circumstances, he predicted Him as the Shiloh, to whom the gathering of the people should be. Moses saw Him in the burning bush, as Jehovah, the eternal

I AM ; and again, in the Passover, at the Red Sea, and all through the wilderness, represented under various figures. Joshua saw Him in the plains of Jericho, as the Captain of the Lord's host. Manoah and his wife saw Him, when He did wondrously before them. David viewed Him by faith, in His sufferings, when he said : ' They pierced my hands and my feet ; ' in His resurrection, as expressed in the 16th Psalm ; he saw Him when He ascended on high, and led captivity captive ; and when He was enthroned at the right hand of the Father : Ps. cx. All this was by faith ; they endured as seeing Him who is invisible to sense. Job saw Him as his Redeemer ; Isaiah, as a child born, and a Son given ; Jeremiah, as the Lord our Righteousness ; Ezekiel, as God's servant David, both Shepherd and King. Daniel saw Him as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands ; Zechariah, as riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. In a word, to Him gave all the prophets witness ; and Himself says : ' Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.'

In the days of His flesh, He was manifested to John, as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world ; and to His disciples, as the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He was seen by them after His resurrection from the dead, and they were conversant with Him. Paul says : ' And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.'

And, bless His precious name ! thousands of His dear people can say, Have I not, by the eye of faith,

seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Yes, my dear friends, we have indeed been favoured, like the Church of old, to behold Him as the Rose of Sharon, rich in odorous perfume, which has often rejoiced our hearts; yea, as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

But all these blessed manifestations are short of that discovery which He will make of Himself, when, according to the text, He shall appear in glory, and we shall be like Him. John says: 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.' It is seeing Him as He is, that will produce in us a perfect conformity to His image. But this cannot take place till the general resurrection. Yet you may remark this, that exactly in proportion as the Lord is pleased to manifest Himself to our faith, are we conformed to His likeness; for, 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,' (Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person,) 'are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The more we see of His adorable Person, the more we hear His sweet voice, the more we are with Him, the more shall we be like Him. But here we only see through a glass, darkly,

but then face to face; here we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known.

In addressing the Father, the Saviour says: 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' It is the beholding of this glory, without a veil between, at the resurrection, that will produce in us complete conformity thereunto. When we see Him as He is, we shall be like Him. We can have but very imperfect ideas of what this glory will be; and yet, blessed be God! we know something about it. Christ will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. At His first advent, though perfectly free from all personal sin, yet, as our Surety, He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But, having, by His life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, for ever put away sin from Himself as a surety, and from those whom He represents, He will appear the second time without it, and so shall all those who are interested in Him. Sin and death will be known no more. This will be a glorious state indeed.

In Christ all the attributes and perfections of Jehovah harmonize, and are exhibited; and so will they be in the glorification of all His saints. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, will shine in their fullest lustre, when He shall present the whole redeemed church to Himself as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. All the grace which is manifested towards

us, and in us, here, will be perfected in eternal glory. The more we see and know of the love of Christ here, the more are we constrained to love Him ; but when we see Him as He is, that perfect vision will complete in us the whole work of perfect conformity to Him. Even our vile bodies shall be changed, and fashioned like to His glorious body. Light will be perfect, life will be perfect, love will be perfect. There will be no night there, no weariness, no change. He is now Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever ; and then we shall be as unchangeable as He is : enthroned with Him, the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall live and reign with Him to all eternity. There will be no dark spots, no uncertainty, no anxiety. There shall be no death there. It will be one eternal Now, for ever the same.

Such shall be the blessed state of all those who live and die *in the Lord*.

Let me just call your attention to the exhortation contained in the beginning of the chapter : 'If ye then be risen' (or, seeing ye are risen) 'with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.' If you tell me, as you will, that you have no power to do this, then ask God to do it for you, according to His own promise : 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart to love the Lord thy God,' &c. And endeavour to remember this, that the minding of the flesh is death, but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace. If we are

favoured here, like Enoch and Noah, to walk with God, we shall certainly live and reign with Christ in His glory for evermore.

May the Almighty condescend to bestow upon us this abundant grace, to live with Him, and to Him, here, and to be with Him hereafter. All religion that leaves a poor sinner short of this is not worth having.

May the good Lord bless every one of you. Amen. So prays your affectionate pastor and friend,
JOHN HOBBS.

CV.

Cambridge Terrace, April 21, 1871.

To all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, may grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

This is a day in which most persons are seeking after knowledge; and this is very well, as far as it goes. But all human knowledge, whatever may be its measure and extent, must soon vanish away. It seems to me that there are two branches of Divine knowledge, which are essential to all who have any concern about their future and immortal state. The first is, that we should know ourselves as sinners, and the second, that we should know Christ as a Saviour. Perhaps some may be ready to say, According to this description, real, true knowledge is contained in a very small compass.— So it may appear to those who are not taught of God; but I believe it will be found at last that they, and only they, are truly wise, who know themselves as sinners, and Christ as a Saviour.

But are not these facts admitted by all who make any profession of religion? yea, few are so judicially hardened as to deny at least the first of these propositions. Most persons will admit that they are not so good as they should be, and therefore that they are necessarily sinners. But for one to know himself as a sinner, and Christ as his Saviour, in a scriptural sense, is far beyond that natural knowledge which has been already described.

Paul tells us that he was alive without the law once, and sin was dead; but that when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died: and further, that the law entered, first into the world, and then into his conscience personally, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. When the law is thus applied to a sinner, and his conscience is made honest to receive it, he discovers that many acts which he is accustomed to perform, many things that he does, and much, very much, that he says, is sinful, that is, contrary to the commandments of God. This is a discovery made of outward transgression. But as the law is spiritual, and we are carnal, sold under sin, its light and power penetrate still deeper. It reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart; and by little and little shows us that all outward sin is the result of a corrupt and polluted nature. This we derive from our common ancestor, Adam, who, through sinning himself, has communicated the universal taint or corruption to all mankind.

Now, all who are thus taught of God out of His righteous law are compelled to acknowledge with David: 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin

did my mother conceive me.' They find by sad experience that they cannot speak a good word, think a good thought, conceive a good desire, or perform a good act. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint ; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, all is wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. The plague of leprosy is within. Yet such persons may do many things gladly, according to the letter of Scripture ; but they find what Job expressed to be true : ' If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean ; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.'

Many have been the remedies invented by man to help himself and his fellow-men in this utterly lost and undone condition ; such as legal repentance, natural faith in the Scriptures, the performance of religious duties, reading, prayer, meditation, and attending the ordinances of God's house ; also using every endeavour to be serviceable to men, to be useful in the world at large. But all these, and every other human invention, have been, and must ever be, found insufficient to help a poor ruined sinner. He can never be acquitted at God's righteous bar, nor in the court of his own conscience ; because he is destitute of true spiritual obedience. He knows nothing of the weighty matters of the law, as judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. He labours hard to obey the precept, and is sincere in his endeavours ; but by no human effort can he ever get the smallest particle of the love of God into his heart. For as the law condemns all his performances, they not springing from the love of

God in his heart, he finds himself to be a hater of God, of His people, and of that full, free, sovereign grace, by which alone poor sinners can be saved. The wrath of God is revealed in the law from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. This naturally stirs up the carnal enmity of the sinner's heart against God, and thus the law worketh wrath.

But some will be ready to say, May not a sinner be saved, without passing through such a fiery ordeal?—It is quite certain that all the Lord's dear people do not experience the same depth of conviction, that they cannot all trace the various effects of the law, as above described, in their own hearts. But of one thing we are sure, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; that He is called Jesus, because He shall save His people from their sins. The discovery of sin is more gradual in the experience of some than of others of His people; though all must know through Divine teaching, sooner or later, in a greater or less degree, that they are sinners in the sight of God.

The doctrine of the universal defilement of mankind, of original sin, and of actual transgression as its necessary consequence, is clearly revealed in the Scriptures; and it may be, and often is, learned as matter of fact, when there is no experience of its soul-distressing effects. Saul could say, 'I have sinned, my son David;' and Pharaoh to Moses, 'I have sinned against the Lord, and against you.' Also Judas, 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.' But none of these felt com-

punction of spirit, loathing of self, on account of sin; there was no *real* repentance. They feared the consequences of sin, as to the punishment thereof, but never loathed themselves in their own sight on account of it. It is not the *depth* of conviction that always imparts to a sinner a true, feeling sense of his being a sinner. Much knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, and among them the universal depravity of man, may be obtained by study, and by the outward means of grace; and yet there may be no humbling sight and sense of the evil of personal sin communicated.

When a sinner's mouth is stopped by the righteous sentence of God's Word, and he has no plea to urge in arrest of judgment, why the sentence should not be executed upon him, the Saviour will appear, standing at the right hand of the poor, to save him from all that would condemn his soul. This is often done by some gracious word of encouragement spoken home by Divine power to the distressed soul, or by some exceeding great and precious promise dropped, as it were, into the heart, or by the shining of a ray of light upon the Word of God, upon the sinner's experience and path, whereby some discovery is made of the willingness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency of the Saviour. Now the poor sinner begins to see that, though in such a wretched condition, his case is not beyond the reach of mercy; that it is not altogether impossible for him to be saved; and perhaps one of the first petitions he is enabled to offer up in faith may be something like the poor leper's, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.'

And, as Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, He will condescend to make a similar reply: 'I will, be thou clean.' Now the doors of faith and hope are opened, and the seeking soul earnestly desires to be favoured with further discoveries of this wonderful Saviour and His great salvation. And thus the Lord is pleased to carry on His own work.

The more the sinner knows of Christ as a Saviour, the more will he know of himself as a sinner. Though the pardon of sin purges the conscience from its guilt, subdues the reigning power of sin in the will, and casts out the love of it from the affections, yet it still remains within. Indwelling sin continues to distress the pardoned sinner all his days; as Paul declares at large in Rom. vii. And thus we find that a sight and sense of sin deepens, as the Lord is pleased to lead us on in His way. If sin is pardoned, we can never forget that we are sinners. When the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when, as he said, his eye saw God, then he was constrained to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes. So every gracious manifestation that the Lord condescends to favour us with, of His pardoning love, pity, and compassion, leads us into a deeper sense of our own unworthiness.

When under the law, all our sin was committed against a just and holy God; but when sin is pardoned, and we are raised to a hope in His mercy, when we have been indulged with communion and fellowship with Himself, when He has made known His secret love to us, and we have been enabled to lay open our

whole heart before Him ; and yet we still find that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, that sin continues to work in us, this makes sin appear exceeding sinful indeed, because it is sinning against light and love ; it is dishonouring to the Saviour, it grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption, suspends communion, separates between God and our souls, and often produces hard thoughts of God, who is our best and only Friend, nourishes unbelief, and, in a word, makes us as miserable in ourselves as can be.

I think Paul's experience had been much like this when he said : ' This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' If I may so express it, it is gospel sinners, or those who sin under the gospel, that is, those who have experienced its saving efficacy, who are the chief of sinners.

Now, my dear friends, in this sense I know myself to be a sinner, and I dare say many of you can say the same. Should the contents of this paper ever be made known to any who have not felt the evil of sin, nor the plague of their own heart, and consequently have never been grieved on account of their own sin, or the sin of others, let them know that they are alike unacquainted with Christ as a Saviour. Such may admit the general fact that all are sinners, because it is written that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but they are unacquainted with personal sin. They know not that the thought of foolishness is sin ; nor that a

proud, covetous, impenitent heart, a self-righteous spirit, a stubborn will, a lying tongue, and an evil eye,—that all these are sin. These have not yet known the Saviour, so as to be touched with compunction for His sorrow, or to grieve over His sufferings or the afflictions of His tried people. Depend upon it, a knowledge of personal sin, more or less, always precedes the true knowledge of Christ as a Saviour.

It is possible to know Christ as a Saviour in theory only; but for a sinner to know Christ as *his* Saviour differs from this altogether. Do all sinners know Christ as a Saviour? I answer, They do not; because there are some who perish in their sins. Judas knew in theory that Christ was a Saviour, but he never knew Him as *his* Saviour.

How then are those sinners distinguished in Scripture, who are brought to know Christ as their Saviour, from others, who are in just judgment suffered to die in their sins? I answer that they were given by the Father in the covenant of grace from all eternity to His dear Son, to be saved by Him; as Himself says: 'Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me.' But then, this is a secret transaction: how is it made manifest in time? According to Scripture, all that were thus given to Christ shall come to Him; as it is written: 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me'—not, *may* come, but, *shall* come. God makes them willing in the day of His power. As the Bridegroom betrothed the church to Himself from everlasting, so in time every member of that church is constrained to come to

Christ, to give himself to Christ, as a woman gives herself to her husband, and to follow Him. So that whatever fears, or doubts, or misgivings of heart may at any time distress a poor sinner, who is thus enabled to come to Christ for the pardon of sin, such a poor sinner never was, and never shall be, cast out by Him.

The Saviour said to the poor paralytic who was brought by others, and laid before Him: 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' Yes, some poor sinner may be ready to reply, if I could hear the Saviour speak such a word to me, then I should know indeed that my sins were forgiven me: this is what I have been long looking for, watching at Wisdom's gates, and waiting at the posts of her doors.—You may never hear such words spoken to you by the Saviour in an articulate manner; but remember that where the word of a King is, there is power. It is that power which attends the Saviour's word, that must assure your heart and mine that our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake. This is often a very gradual work. We sometimes rise in hope, then sink in fear; almost believe, then call it in question again. Sometimes the Saviour shines upon us, and in our hearts, as the Sun of righteousness, then again withholds the light of His countenance. He hides His face, and we are troubled.

This knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins, or knowledge of Christ as *our* Saviour, differs from all other kinds of knowledge. If we attain to the knowledge of anything that is temporal, say, of science, or mechanics, or anything else that is

common to the intellect of man, such attainment is permanent ; there is no going back : what a man knows, he does know. But the knowledge of which we are treating differs from all other knowledge, in this respect, that it stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Those who are favoured with it may not be left to call in question any truth contained in the Bible, and yet they may be deeply exercised about their own interest in God's salvation. When the Saviour condescends to show a smiling face, to speak a gracious and encouraging word, to admit us to near communion with Himself, we can indeed believe that our sins are forgiven us. According to John, even little children in Divine grace may know this, as he says : ' I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.'

Perhaps some may be ready to say that this is trusting to frames and feelings ; that we should rather trust the Saviour when and where we cannot trace Him. Well, I desire to be favoured with such a confiding faith ; and yet I would rather, if it were the Lord's gracious will, be blessed with a faith that can so pierce through any dark cloud that separates between me and Him, as to behold Him ; such a faith as can bring distant things near, being the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. To trust the Saviour at a distance is a great favour ; but so to believe in Him as to bring Him into our very heart, soul, and affections, is a greater. I know that I cannot attain to this myself, any more than I could at first believe, until the Saviour was pleased to say : ' Stretch forth thine

hand of faith ;' and I know that He who began this good work has power sufficient to perfect it, and therefore I labour in spirit after it.

Our spiritual life is a complete riddle. We can of ourselves do nothing, and yet we are labourers together with Him. Faith is His gift, but we believe. He circumcises our hearts to love Him, yea, He sheds abroad His own love in our hearts, and the result is that we love Him.

To know the Saviour as ours, is to be known of Him. He says : 'I know my sheep, and am known of mine.' We know His voice, and He knows our cry. He seeks after His sheep, that is, after poor, lost, ruined, undone sinners, by the word of the gospel ; and they seek to know Him as their Saviour. Paul knew the Lord already when he said : 'That I *may* know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.' You and I, my dear friends, must, through Divine teaching, possess this knowledge in some small measure, or we shall never have any right ideas about it, or value it. It often seems to human reason to be a complete contradiction—to know, and not to know ; that is, to hope and believe that Christ is indeed our Saviour, and that our sins are, and shall be, forgiven for His name's sake, and yet to tremble, fear, and quake, lest it should not be so. A natural man, whatever may be his attainments in human knowledge, can never receive or understand this. It is hid from the wise and prudent of this world, and yet it is revealed even to babes in Divine grace.

Do not fear, poor, miserable, uncomfortable, dissatisfied soul ; if you want something, and you do not at present know exactly what, wait upon God, both in private and public, and He will in His own time be found of you ; for He says : ‘ Those that seek me early shall find me.’ And when He condescends to come, He will make all right, and show you that He has been emptying you, as to all creature comforts and enjoyments, in order to make way for a true discovery of your real state as a sinner. And depend upon it, if He leads you to feel, and know, and mourn over this, He will in His own time reveal Himself in your heart as your Saviour. This is real personal religion.

It is thus that thousands of Adam’s fallen race have been, and are brought, each one to know himself as a sinner, and also to know Christ as his Saviour, who says : ‘ This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’ All Zion’s children are taught of the Lord ; and the Saviour says : ‘ Every man that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me ;’ and, ‘ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ Therefore if you are a coming sinner, you shall surely be a saved sinner. This going and coming, that is, Christ’s coming to us, and our going to Him, is truly wonderful. Those who are favoured to know something about it, will at times be lost and absorbed in admiration, wonder, and delight, at God’s unspeakable mercy.

But, blessed be God ! there is a state before us, in which all who know themselves as sinners, and

Christ as a Saviour, shall for ever cease to experience any of the effects of sin. It shall not only be swallowed up, but for ever blotted out. Sin and death shall be swallowed up in victory ; but Christ and His great salvation shall eternally fill every faculty of the soul, heart, affections, mind, and memory. Nothing will or shall be known but Christ, in all His fulness of covenant relation as a Saviour. We shall be filled with Him, so as to be like Him, body, soul, and spirit. I believe we shall know ourselves only as we are in Christ. If the saints could remember sin in heaven, it seems to me as if it would, as it were, cast a shade over that glorious view which will admit nothing to be seen but itself, and that is Christ. Christ will be not only all, but *in* all, in such an unspeakable sense as to shut out for ever everything but Himself.

And this, my dear friends, is what we want, and are seeking after here in some small measure, that we may have such a view of Christ in our salvation, as to see and know nothing of ourselves, nothing else.—Yours affectionately in the Lord, ~

JOHN HOBBS.

CVI.

Cambridge Terrace, April 28, 1871.

My dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,—Though absent in body, yet am I with you in spirit. It was forty-seven years the 28th of last September since my ever-gracious Lord and Master was pleased to put me, His unworthy servant, into the ministry ; and it

was forty-four years the 5th of last November since I first spoke in His name at Staining Lane ; and I can say with the Apostle that I have continual remembrance of you all, making mention of you in my prayers.

I have been thinking of that gracious promise made of God unto His servant Moses : ‘ My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’ Moses had been brought into very trying circumstances. Having been forty days with his God in the mount, and absent from the people of Israel, they became impatient, and said to Aaron : ‘ As for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. Make us gods that shall go before us.’ O, my dear friends, how frequently have I been the subject of such impatience ; unwilling to wait God’s time for the fulfilment of His promise, I have been continually endeavouring to arrange and contrive for myself.

Aaron made the calf, and thus the people fell into idolatry. When Moses saw this, his anger was kindled : a holy zeal for the honour of his God fired his breast : and now we see him as a type of the Mediator, having made an atonement for the people, interceding for them. God graciously answered his request, but said that He would not go in the midst of them—that is, without a mediator—lest He should consume them in a moment. Moses said : ‘ See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people ; and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me.’ ‘ And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’ This was

what Moses wanted; therefore he said, 'If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' And indeed, my dear friends, it is God's presence which we need everywhere, at all times, and under all circumstances.

By the presence of God thus promised to Moses, we are not to understand His omnipresence, or that Divine presence by which He is everywhere, in all things, and with all persons; as David says: 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?' because this is not peculiar, but is common to all God's creatures. But God made an especial promise to an especial person: 'My presence shall go with *thee*,' and this produced an especial desire and petition: 'If Thy presence go not with *me*,' &c.

What then is here meant by God's presence? I answer, The Lord said: 'Behold mine Angel shall go before thee.' This does not intend a created angel, but an angel, or messenger, by office; and is the same that we read of in Genesis xxii. 11, 12: 'And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from *me*.' And again: 'By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in blessing I will bless thee,' &c. And Paul tells us (Hebrews vi. 13) that when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.

Again (Is. lxiii. 8) the Lord says: 'Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.' All this applies to our adorable Saviour, who in His highest nature is over all, God blessed for evermore. Though He is not an angel by nature (for He took not on Him the nature of angels), yet He is such by office; being sent by the Father as His messenger or angel, and called the Angel of Jehovah's presence, because in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person. And therefore, whenever He condescends to manifest Himself to a poor sinner, there is also a manifestation of the Father, as Himself said: 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

Was then this promise, 'My presence shall go with thee,' made to Moses only? I answer, No; for the Saviour says to His whole church: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.' If then this does not signify His omnipresence, it is not made to all men alike. If it is limited to His church and people, we would humbly inquire how it is manifested to them, and not to the world, that we may through His gracious teaching be led to a discovery of our own interest therein.

We have seen that this promise was first given

to Moses, though not limited to him. Man, while in a state of nature, knows nothing about it, nor has he any desire for it ; hence he says : ' Depart from me ; I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.' Sin has produced a complete separation between God and His creature, man. How clearly this is displayed in the instance of the prodigal son ; who, though he was secretly interested in the favour of God, yet, while he was in a natural state, went into a far country, thus departing as far as he could from Him. In this matter, then, we see, as in everything else that concerns our welfare, that God goes before us. Moses did not ask that God's presence might go with him, until God had promised that it should. God first loved us, or we never should have loved Him. He so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Here is first God's love to the world—He so loved the world ; then the effect of that love—He gave His only-begotten Son. All this goes first ; then follows the description of those who are interested in it, which is, ' Whosoever believeth in Him.' Now, this faith is not given to all, for all men do not believe. But one thing I am sure of, that all who have in any measure been favoured to taste that the Lord is gracious, will, like Moses, desire His presence to be with them ; that is, that they may truly know and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only manifestation of Jehovah. For to know, enjoy, believe in, and experience the pre-

ciousness of His adorable Person, is to realize the presence of God, as our covenant God in Him.

He manifests Himself to His people ; and they are described in the Word as being sanctified by God the Father ; that is, they were set apart from eternity, and are called in time, to be His people. They are preserved in Jesus Christ, not from the ruins of the fall, as sin, &c., but from its final consequences ; for, being chosen in Christ, they shall never perish, nor shall any ever pluck them out of His hand. They are also called with an holy calling, or they would never call upon God aright.

I believe that one of the first proofs of God's saving presence being with us, is, our desiring it. If God had not promised to grant us His presence, we should never seek for it. To have His presence with us, is for Him to go before us, as He went before Israel. We may safely follow wheresoever He leads, even though it be through the Red Sea and the waste howling wilderness.

But how may I know that God is leading me ? Only by His making a way for me. If there seem to be several paths open before us, we are generally constrained to wait till all but one are closed up ; and even that which may seem sometimes to be quite plain, may at other times appear so difficult, that we think we shall never be able to pass through it. Here God makes a way for our escape, and thus manifests that His presence is with us. Such wonderful things sometimes occur in our experience, that we feel assured the hand of God

is in them. Such seeming contradictions, impossibilities, things so unlooked-for, so unexpected, and even unthought-of, come to pass, that we are constrained to say: 'It is the Lord.' If, like the prophet, we cry and shout, and we get no answer, then we say: 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' But if in some unlooked-for manner He condescends to do for us abundantly above all that we ask or think, then we say: 'The Lord is with us indeed.' And so He is, whether He withdraws His sensible presence, or lifts up the light of His countenance upon us.

He was with His people in the Red Sea ; this is clear ; for they walked in a path that none had ever gone in before, and in which none could follow them without being overwhelmed. We need not wonder, then, if many things in our path appear singular ; this is rather an evidence that the Lord condescends to regard us in an especial manner, when He chooses that which is peculiar for us. All His dear children must have the portion appointed for them. There is no mistake here. One cannot be another. Though all are taught the same lessons, yet the manner of teaching is as various as the persons. There are not two in all respects alike, and yet they are all one in Christ Jesus. It is by such things as these that we are brought to know that we have His presence with us, for none but Himself could do what He does for us.

Before God made this promise to Moses, he had proofs of God's presence being already with him,

in the pillar of cloud, and in the shining of flaming fire by night, which went before him. And have not you and I sometimes said that if we could have such visible tokens of God's presence with us, we should never doubt again? Alas! this is a great mistake; for Israel, who had a constant discovery of the cloud by day and the fire by night going before them, could say: 'Is the Lord among us, or not?' Such is the awful and desperate power of unbelief. No, my friends, it is not all the outward or visible discoveries in the world, that can ever produce a true and living faith in the heart of a poor sinner. Faith is the gift of God; it stands in an almighty power, and is produced in us by the Spirit of faith. God's presence with us can never be realized by sense alone, however conspicuous may be the displays of His power. Man's wisdom will attribute even miracles to any agency rather than the power of God; witness the Jews who ascribed the Saviour's miracles to the power of Satan. We walk by faith, and not by sight. Nothing less than true faith can ever realize the presence of God.

The Apostle tells us that He is not far from every one of us, if haply we may feel after Him and find Him; which all surely shall, who feel after, look for, earnestly seek, and desire to find Him in their own hearts.

Under a deep sight and sense of sin, David feared that he might lose the presence of God. He said: 'Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.' No poor,

broken-hearted, contrite backslider, who knows the plague of his own heart, will be surprised at such a petition as this ; for while he knows, and is persuaded that God is of one mind, and none can turn Him, and that it is said of the Saviour that having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end, yet a deep sight and sense of indwelling sin will often so enfeeble faith, that it seems impossible to believe that God is, or can be, really with such a one. Though the doctrines of absolute grace can never be shaken, it will never be found that the simple acknowledgment of their truth will support a tempted child of God in his deep exercises and trials. There must be something more than this ; namely, a continued supply of grace from that fulness which is in Christ Jesus. We cannot stand alone.

To have the Lord's presence with us implies our being brought near to Him, by which access is obtained. When we are near to Him, and He near to us, it produces familiarity ; as it is said of some of old, that they walked with God. He condescends to reveal the secrets of His will, of His love, of His purposes, as they are expressed in His most holy Word, for our support and encouragement by the way ; and we are at times enabled to tell Him everything that we feel and know about ourselves and others. There is no freedom or familiarity in the world that can produce a parallel to this. There is at times such an unfolding of hearts, that He keeps nothing back from us that is profitable for us to know, and we dare not, cannot, keep anything

back from Him. How is the reality of this proved, when we can say with the Psalmist: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

Again: His presence with us is often made known, by His counteracting and overruling the otherwise inevitable effects of the circumstances we may be in. The children of Israel must have been drowned in the Red Sea, if their God had not been with them; they must have lost their way in the wilderness, if He had not gone before them; they must have been starved, if He had not supplied them with bread from heaven, and water from the rock. David would certainly have perished, if God had not been his rock, fortress, and deliverer. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego must have been consumed in the fire, had not the Son of God, the Angel of Jehovah's presence, been with them in the furnace; as He says: 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' Daniel must have been destroyed in the lions' den, if God had not shut the mouths of the lions. And how often would you and I have been swallowed up whole as the grave, and alive as they that go down to the pit, if our gracious God had not condescended to interpose His almighty hand. To enumerate every circumstance that might have led to our destruction, both in this world and in that which is to come, must necessarily be an impossible

task ; as to these matters, every heart knoweth its own bitterness. But every deliverance that has been wrought out for us, is a standing monument of God's presence with us. This, alas ! we are too apt to forget. All helps, supplies, deliverances, and supports by the way, whether temporal or spiritual, must come from God, for without Him we can do nothing ; and therefore they are evidences that hitherto He has helped us.

Again : We should remember who it is that gave the promise, 'My presence shall go with thee,' &c. : that it is the immutable and unchangeable Jehovah, who is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent. But it may be objected, that God repented that He had made man ; and that it is said in respect of Israel, that they should know His breach of promise. May not the same thing happen to us ?—Let it be observed that the unfulfilled promises of God were conditional ones ; as the continuance of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan was made to depend upon their obedience. All the *unconditional* promises of God are made to *faith*. Israel could not enter into the promised land, because of unbelief ; and as God knows that we are all by nature in a state of unbelief, perfectly destitute of faith, He has promised that He will persuade Japheth, and that he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; that is, that He will bestow the gift of faith upon all His covenant family, that He will make an everlasting covenant with them, that He will not turn away from them to do them good ; nay more, that He will make all secure, by putting His fear

in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Him.

But are there not those who will be ready to say, Have I an interest in the unconditional promise?—If God has begun His work in you, you certainly have; for Paul says: ‘Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’

I often find a propensity to judge of the Lord’s dealings with me, according as I walk with Him; as thus—If I am favoured to enjoy His presence with me, to see Him going before me, and His hand with me, I am ready to conclude that He is my God indeed; but if I am in a cold, backsliding state, I am tempted to call in question my interest in His grace. Now, though what the prophet Azariah said to Asa will always be found a truth: ‘Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you:’ yet this can never alter the unconditional promise; *that* is yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Our abiding with the Lord is not the procuring cause of His abiding with us. It does indeed prove our interest in Him; because it is by Him that we are kept, even by His almighty power, through faith unto salvation. Our abiding with Him is the evidence, the fruit and effect of His everlasting love to us. Professors may leave Him altogether; His own dear children may, and do too often, backslide from Him, through the power of unbelief, of indwelling sin, and the like; but never are they, nor shall

they be, permitted finally to depart from Him. The covenant and covenanting Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, stands pledged for their final perseverance. How often does He say: 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' This is the true cause why all His dear family must and shall endure to the end.

I am still on my watch-tower, earnestly desiring to hear and see what the Lord will condescend to say to me, and to do with me. If it is His gracious will, I shall be glad to come among my dear friends again, and that as soon as He may be pleased to enable me. I cannot doubt that I shall still have an interest in the prayers of those whom I love for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

OVII.

Cambridge Terrace, May 5, 1871.

To them that watch at Wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors in Staining Lane Chapel.—I John, who am still the Lord's prisoner in bonds, once more greet you in His name, wishing you all grace, from the fountain-fulness of Him who is the source and spring of every blessing and good thing, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Amen.

I have had such thoughts as the following pass through my mind, What is the use of my continuing to send you these scraps, as there is so much preaching everywhere? But there are two considerations that encourage me to persevere. First, I have been favoured with a sense of the Lord's presence whilst

inditing and dictating the matter; and you know our poet says:

‘The way I walk cannot be wrong,
If Jesus be but there;’

and second, I have heard that some of my dear friends have been profited thereby. It is but a mite cast into the treasury. May the Lord of the harvest make such use of it as He pleases. I am watching and waiting to know what may be the will of my dear Lord and Master concerning my future. If He is pleased to enable me, I shall come among you, whether expected or not.

I have been meditating a little on what is written in *Malachi* iii. 6: ‘I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.’

We must not limit the ‘sons of Jacob’ to those who derive their natural being from him as a father; the whole church of Christ is intended, whether Jew or Gentile, all who, being Christ’s, are the spiritual seed of Abraham: ‘If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’ Paul, writing to the Galatian churches, who were Gentiles, says: ‘As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the *Israel* of God.’ This agrees with *Isaiah*: ‘One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of *Israel*.’

Who is there among the *Israel* of God, who has not often feared that he should be consumed alto-

gether, by some enemy or other? It is profitable, when, like Moses, we are favoured to turn aside and see that great sight, how it is that the bush burns, and is not consumed. This was a very significant figure, first, of literal Israel in Egyptian bondage, and secondly, of the whole spiritual family in their various afflictions, trials, &c.

Jehovah has been pleased to reveal Himself in the sacred Scriptures, as the only true, self-existent, and independent God, subsisting in a Trinity of Persons, having neither beginning nor end. Being underived and self-existent, He is necessarily without changeableness or shadow of turning. The Father is a distinct Person in the Godhead. He says: 'From everlasting to everlasting I am God.' The Son is the eternal I AM; and the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person in the Godhead, and is the eternal Spirit. 'Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' If the Holy Spirit had been called only the spirit or breath of the Lord, an influence or emanation from the Godhead might have been intended; but He is spoken of as a Person, distinct from the Father and the Son. Personal pronouns are applied to Him, which must mean more than an office, name, or character in the Godhead. The names by which the Holy Spirit is spoken of, are applied only to proper persons. 'The Holy Ghost said, Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I* have called them.' And the Saviour says: 'When *He*, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' As the Father is the Creator of all things, and the Son,

so also is the Holy Spirit. Elihu says : ' The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' Indeed, the whole Word of God is filled with testimonies concerning the Godhead and distinct Personality of the Holy Ghost. And as it is the Spirit of God who is the producer of the new creation as well as the old, it is absolutely necessary and essential that all the family of God should be firmly established, and at a point, respecting this greatest, this most sublime of all mysteries, a Trinity of Persons in the One indivisible Jehovah.

' I am the Lord ; I change not.' That is, no change ever did, or ever can, take place in the nature of His being, in the mode of His existence ; nothing can be added to Him, or taken from Him. He can receive no increase of knowledge ; for, ' Known unto God are all His works from the beginning.' Now, what He is in Himself, such is He in all His attributes and perfections. His will lies at the foundation of all that He does ; and this will of His never did, and never can change. It respects all the sons of Jacob ; that is, as before said, His whole church. He says : ' I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' His *I will* and *They shall* are immutable. He willed to love Jacob and all his spiritual seed from everlasting ; as it is written : ' Jacob have I loved.' He loves all those whom He wills to love ; and therefore, His love is unchangeable.

As connected with this everlasting love, is His foreknowledge of His Israel : ' You only have I known of all the families of the earth ;' and His eternal choice of them : ' I have chosen thee, and not cast thee

away.' Because He changes not, His will, His love, His choice changes not ; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

It is the following things that threatened to consume the whole family of our spiritual Jacob. Every poor sinner saved by sovereign grace has a personal interest in them.

First, the sin of Adam must have finally destroyed all the spiritual seed of Jacob (for they were as truly the children of Adam as the rest of the world), if Jehovah had not been unchangeable in His will concerning them.

Secondly, each of us who have felt the evil of sin must be constrained to acknowledge, that his own corruption of nature, his own personal sin, must have consumed him, if the sparing, unchangeable mercy of God had not prevented it. And since we have been brought to know the Lord for ourselves, as a sin-pardoning God, we continually feel enough in self, in our own sinful propensities, to consume and swallow us up, if God was not unchangeable in His purposes of grace and favour towards us.

Thirdly, Satan would continually swallow us up, through the power of temptation working upon our corrupt and polluted nature, were not God unchangeable in His all-sufficient grace. Paul found this, when the Lord said to him : ' My grace is sufficient for thee.'

Fourthly, the many trials, troubles, and afflictions, which more or less attend the whole family of God all through their pilgrimage, must consume and swallow ~~them~~ up, if the Lord was not their unchangeable

refuge. In proof of this, you may read almost the whole Bible. Job, David, Jeremiah, indeed all the saints, will each bear his own testimony to this truth.

Fifthly, if the Lord was not on our side, may Israel now say, when men rise up against us, they would swallow us up quick, when their wrath is kindled against us. The world would soon destroy the church, either by flattery or by persecution, by outward prosperity or adversity, by its smiles or its frowns, by its allurements or its menaces, if the Lord was not on the side of His people.

Yes, my dear friends, by one or all of these enemies, Jacob and his sons, and we amongst them, must have been swallowed up long ago, if our God was not the faithful, unchangeable Jehovah.

‘I am the Lord; I change not.’ God is as unchangeable in respect of His justice as of His mercy. Unchangeable justice demands that every sinner should receive the just reward of his sins; and we know that the wages of sin is death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. It also requires that every righteous person should receive the reward of inheritance, freely promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their spiritual seed. Now, nothing short of the unchangeable love, wisdom, and power of the unchangeable Jehovah could ever have brought this about, that Divine justice should be on the side of God’s Israel; because, as it has been already proved, all the sons of Jacob are sinners, in as full a sense as the rest of the world. But God has provided a Saviour, in the person of His dear Son, who undertook, as their Surety, to pay all the debts of the sons of Israel.

He paid the debt of perfect obedience to the moral law, thereby becoming the Lord their Righteousness. This He could do, being Himself completely righteous, a just God and a Saviour ; righteous in His Godhead, righteous in His manhood. As He is without sin, He did not need for Himself the perfect moral obedience which He rendered to the law, in that spotless life which He lived. He pleased the Father in everything. He said : ' I delight to do Thy will, O my God ; yea, Thy law is within my heart.' His love to God and man was perfect and complete ; and love is the fulfilling of the law. This obedience of the Saviour, He freely bestows upon all the sons of Jacob. God the Father accepts it on their behalf, and imputes it to them. Blessed with this righteousness, the lost, ruined sons of Jacob are in the sight of God as truly freed from sin as though they had never committed it.

This blessed Surety also paid the debt of suffering due to Divine justice from all the sinful sons of Jacob ; and hence there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, as their covenant Head and Surety, and who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ; which walking is the effect of their being cleansed from the guilt of sin, by free, immutable grace : ' Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' And when any one of the sons of Jacob is, through Divine teaching, by an application of the law to his conscience, brought to confess from his heart before God that he is indeed a lost sinner, sooner or later he is sure to receive the knowledge of salvation through the for-

givenness of sins. It is written : ' If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

Thus you see that the sentence of death, to which all the sons of Jacob were subject through sin, having been executed upon the Surety, and that perfect obedience which the law had a right to demand from them, having been rendered by Him, they, on that account, become perfectly righteous, even as God is righteous ; for the righteousness of the God-man Mediator is their righteousness. It is freely imputed to them, and accepted by God for them. He has revealed it in the gospel, and makes it known to that faith which He produces in their hearts. It is to all, and upon all, them that believe. It is on this account that they are called ' the righteous nation.' It is in this way that a just and holy God cleanses, pardons, acquits, and justifies all the sons of Jacob from their sins.

Sin being thus removed, there remains no other hindrance to their receiving the reward of inheritance promised to righteous Abraham and his seed. It is written : ' Thy people shall be all righteous ; they shall inherit the land for ever ; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' God willed from all eternity that, whatever might happen in time, all the spiritual seed of Jacob should be righteous. This will could never be changed : ' I am the Lord ; I change not : therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

What can consume or destroy them? Not their sins, their fears, their unbelief, the dangers to which they may be exposed, either from inward or outward foes. Surely nothing; for *that* Jehovah who changes not has said: 'Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.' The will of God, the purpose of God, the love of God, and the justice of God, all demand the everlasting welfare of the Israel of God.

Again: Because He says: 'I am the Lord; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed,' therefore they are preserved from final destruction. This is further manifested by the several relations in which God condescends to reveal Himself towards the sons of Jacob. He is their God: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.' And He changes not. He is their Father: 'I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.' He will never disown His children. They may, like the prodigal son, be suffered to wander far away from Him, but there is a time when He will bring every one of them back to Himself again, and say of each: 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found;' and this because, as a Father, He changes not.

Again, it is said of the Saviour: 'Thy Maker is thine Husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called.' He will never suffer this conjugal relation to change. Zion may

say at times, in her fits of unbelief: 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me;' but this is not true, for her Husband never changes in His kindness towards her. He loves her too dearly, she cost Him too much, for Him either to forget or neglect her. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.' And why? Because He is the unchangeable Jehovah, the same yesterday, representing the eternity that is past; to-day, which means the time-state; and for ever, the eternity that is to come.

Once more: He does not change with respect to His promises. He says: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words' (that is, of prophecy and promise) 'shall not pass away.' As I have observed in a former letter, there are some of God's promises which are never fulfilled; that is, according to the interpretation put upon them by human wisdom: but then, all such promises are made conditionally. There are promises both conditional and unconditional. This is seen in respect of the land of Canaan, promised to Abraham and his seed according to the flesh. The gift was unconditional: 'To thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee;' but the promise that they should *retain* this gift was made to them conditionally. If they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, they were to retain it for ever; but if they were disobedient, God said He would cast them out of it. The promise was made through Moses to the

natural seed of Jacob, when they came out of the land of Egypt ; but we are told that the Lord, having saved the people out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not. God said that that generation should know His breach of promise. And yet God never changed His mind, nor altered His word ; for He had never said that that generation should possess the land of promise, but that it should be given to the seed of Jacob. And this was punctually performed. For though that generation which believed not were cut off through their unbelief, their children who succeeded them realized the promise in all its fulness. They entered into that good land which their fathers despised ; and God's longsuffering mercy was extended to future generations, even until all the promises made to Jacob and his sons were fulfilled in the advent of the Saviour, in whom they are all made. All the promises made to the *spiritual* sons of Jacob are *unconditional*, and therefore they must be accomplished, because He who made them is without variableness or shadow of turning.

Furthermore, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Observe the Father's promise made to His dear Son, and to all His spiritual seed in Him : ' As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord ; My Spirit that is upon Thee, and my words which I have put in Thy mouth, shall not depart out of Thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' It is the Holy Spirit who is the author of the whole work

of grace in every saved sinner. And as it is promised that the Spirit shall never be taken away from Christ and His spiritual seed, so the good work which He begins in the saints must be continued even to the end. Our Lord said to the woman of Samaria : ' He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ' (that is, for any other water) ; ' but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' The holy and ever-blessed Spirit, with all His saving operations, is here intended ; and our Lord told His disciples : ' I will send you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.' Therefore, whatever fears may distress the hearts of those who are quickened into life, lest the work of the Lord in them should cease, through their own unbelief, the prevalence of sin, or the temptations of Satan ; the immutability of God in His promises secures the perfecting of His work in the souls of all His regenerated family. It is because Jehovah changes not, that the work of grace can never cease where it is begun, until it is perfected in eternal glory. He that gives grace will crown it with glory. Gifts bestowed upon bond-servants may be withdrawn, but the inheritance of the children must and shall be theirs for ever. And why ? Not through any merit in themselves, but because their Father is immutable. He is in one mind, and none can turn Him. It is this, and this alone, that secures the temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare of all the saints. God's immutability is the foundation of all our hopes and expectations here and

hereafter. Every poor, tried, tempted child of God is hereby encouraged to say :

‘How can I sink with such a prop
As bears the world and all things up?’

—Yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

CVIII.

Cambridge Terrace, May 12, 1871.

To that small part of the living family of God, assembling for His worship at Staining Lane Chapel, their servant and brother in Christ wishes all health and spiritual prosperity, from the living and life-going Head of the whole mystical body.

I have been thinking for some days past of what the Holy Ghost says by Paul, 1 Corinthians xv. 26 : ‘The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.’

This chapter treats at large of that blessed subject, the resurrection from the dead ; a truth without which all the saints would be most miserable. What would become of all our hopes and expectations, comforts and enjoyments, if they were limited to the time-state ? They would be gone for ever ; for the more we are favoured here with the saving knowledge of Christ, so as to say, ‘I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine,’ the more miserable we should be at the idea of a final separation from Him. For whatever we may know, experience, and enjoy of His preciousness now, there is still something better to be looked forward to, to be waited for, to be expected ; namely, to be for ever with the Lord.

It is those seasons in which He hides Himself from us, when He keeps back the face of His throne, withholds the light of His countenance, and suspends the sweet manifestation of His endearing presence, that are, truly speaking, the cause of all our sorrow now. For to whatever we may attribute our present troubles, griefs, and vexations, they will all be found to arise from the absence of our best Beloved. When the Bridegroom is taken away, the true children of the bridechamber are sure to mourn. When He is with us, discovering His love, grace, and favour, we do not want anything beside; but when He withdraws Himself, the whole creation is but a blank; and every kind of trouble, both inward and outward, is experienced by us. As the Psalmist expresses it: 'Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.'

But to come to our text: 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' First, what is death? It is the righteous sentence pronounced by the justice of God, according to His will, upon the whole of this lower creation, in consequence of man's transgression, God having appointed him head and lord of all the inferior creatures. Adam had free permission to eat of all the trees of the garden in which he was placed, except that of the knowledge of good and evil, concerning which God said: 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' And this, as I said, is extended not only to the whole posterity of man, but to all the inferior creatures. They all became subject to death through man's disobedience.

Death is found to consist, first, in the separation of the soul from the body; this is temporal death. Secondly, in a total alienation of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, from God, with all the faculties, principles, and powers with which he was originally endowed. This is spiritual death; and it extends to every individual of the human family, for all are born dead in trespasses and sins. Thirdly, in the everlasting continuance of man in that state which has just been described. While he is in this world, there is, as far as we know, a ground of hope for him; for we know not the secret purposes of God, as to who may be embraced in His sovereign decree of election, until He is pleased to make it manifest, either by calling the lost sinner out of darkness into His marvellous light, or by suffering him to go out of this world in that state of spiritual death, of spiritual estrangement from God, in which all are, until they are quickened into life by the Saviour's almighty voice. Those who in just judgment are suffered to perish in their sins, are without hope. They that go down into the pit cannot hope for God's truth. These suffer that eternal wrath to which all are exposed by sin. This state of final separation from God is eternal death.

Sin is the procuring cause of death: 'Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Death is called an enemy: 'The last *enemy* that shall be destroyed is death.' It is an enemy to God; for though, as it has been proved, it is the just sentence pronounced by God upon sin, it is His enemy, as it is the consequence of the dishonour

done to Him by sin, and as it is that which threatened to separate the objects of His everlasting love from Him. Christ, as her Bridegroom, loved His Church with an everlasting love ; but death, through Satan's craft and man's sin, interposed, threatening the final separation of the Church from her Almighty Husband and Redeemer. And this must really have taken place, had not the Saviour condescended to die, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It was necessary, for the honour of God and the salvation of His redeemed family, that the Saviour should lay down His life, that He might take it again.

That death was the Saviour's enemy, is plain from what Himself says : 'The sorrows of death compassed me,' &c. And again : 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.'

Death is the enemy of all men, as it is the just reward of sin. It is the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

I proceed, the Lord enabling me, to speak a little about its destruction. That it was foreseen by Jehovah from all eternity, is clear from the Scriptures. As the omniscient God, He knew all things from everlasting, and hence the provision made in the covenant of grace for its destruction. The promise of life was in Christ before the world began. God made man upright, free to stand, and free to fall ; but man chose to break away from, and to disobey, his Creator, and death was the consequence of his disobedience.

Now, in order to destroy this enemy, the eternal

Son of God, He who is the true God, and eternal life, took a portion of the children's flesh and blood into union with His own Divine Person. This was a holy portion of our nature, perfectly free from all taint of sin. Adam's sin, as a public head, was not imputed to it, because it was not a person, but a thing; therefore it was said to Mary: 'That holy *thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Adam's sin is imputed only to persons. 'Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'

But the sins of the elect are imputed to Christ. They, through sin, were subject to death; and Christ, being one with them, condescended to die for them. How wonderful is this union between the Saviour and the children, between the Bridegroom and the bride, that whatever belongs to the one belongs also to the other. Our sins became His, not by commission, but by assumption: His righteousness is ours, not by performance, but by imputation. Such is His astonishing love, that He will not, as Man and Mediator, possess or enjoy anything in which His dear family shall not be brought to participate. His grace is our grace, His life our life, His righteousness our righteousness. He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust; and we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together. All that He has done is as much ours as though we had done it ourselves. He tells us that as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son (that is, as Mediator) to have

life in Himself. As the eternal God, He received life from none; but as the King Messiah, He asked life, and God gave it Him, even length of days for ever and ever. And He says to all His dear people: 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' It is this that fitted Him to be the destruction of death; as He says: 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.'

Christ came that He might destroy not only death, but him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. This He began to accomplish, when in single combat He vanquished Satan. It is written: 'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.' Oh! what two mighty champions were here engaged; both mighty, but one was almighty. Satan had never been foiled before. He prevailed, through temptation, against Adam at first; and ever after, all the sons and daughters of Adam were led captive by him at his will, until rescued by Him who is stronger than he. But against the second Adam the tempter could never prevail. In a threefold trial of strength, the Seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, and foiled him in all his temptations; nor could it be otherwise, for our dear Lord said: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' The old serpent could neither make any impression, nor leave any trace, upon Him who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And thus the Saviour wrested the sceptre from the hand of him who had the power of death.

Again: Our ever-blessed Jesus demolished the

empire of Satan, when He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and thus disarmed death of its only sting ; for ‘ the sting of death is sin.’ This had been removed from the persons of God’s elect, and imputed to the Saviour, in the everlasting covenant of grace ; and when He died, He put away the sins of His covenant people from Himself as their Surety. The death of the Saviour did not take place in consequence of any imperfection or weakness in His sacred humanity. That one offering which He made of Himself, was altogether a voluntary sacrifice. Through the natural defilement of sin, every human being became mortal, subject to every sickness and disease which of necessity produces death. But our dear Lord and Saviour had nothing of this. That holy portion of the children’s flesh and blood which He assumed, and took into union with His Divine Person, was entirely free from all imperfection, and consequently was not subject to death ; for where there is no sin, the wages of death could never be due. And thus the Saviour, by putting away sin, foiled the counsel of Satan, and disarmed death of its power to hurt those who sleep in Jesus : thus He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross.

Again : When the Saviour rose from the dead, ascended on high, and led captivity captive, there was a full manifestation of His glorious triumph over sin, Satan, death, hell, and the grave. It was impossible that He could be holden of death, or that the spotless Lamb of God could see corruption, being perfectly free from it : and having made an atonement

for sin, which was the only procuring cause of death, He had an indisputable right to put forth His almighty power, and again to take that life which He had in love laid down for His people. And thus death was entirely vanquished. Christ, having risen from the dead, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him, nor over His redeemed family. For though they must all be conformed to their Head, and follow Him through the valley of the shadow of death, yet His and their last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Paul says : 'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' For as the law is the ministration of death and condemnation, so the everlasting gospel is a revelation of eternal life and salvation. How the Saviour abolished death, by laying down His own precious life and taking it again, I have endeavoured very briefly to show. And a conformity must be brought about between the glorious Head and His mystical body. This is clearly revealed in the gospel.

The destruction of death, with respect to every member of Christ, commences in their being quickened into life : 'And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' Whenever God condescends to perform this work in the experience of

a lost sinner, the state of death, in which that sinner was before, is destroyed. Whatever may be his fears, his sight and sense of the evil of sin, of the danger to which he is exposed, of the Divine displeasure under which he groans, of that state of condemnation from the law, conscience, yea, the whole Word of God, in which he finds himself, together with all things that trouble and distress him, he is not dead to God. You cannot persuade him to believe this. No, it is the power of God alone that can produce in his heart a measure of saving faith; yet that he is not dead is manifest to others, by the general tone of his conversation. He cannot help at times giving expression to his sense of danger, to those secret desires which he begins to feel after an interest in Christ. Like the poor prodigal, he is hungry, and nothing can satisfy his appetite but the bread of eternal life.

This spiritual life is derived from a secret union with the spiritual Head. But how hard it is for a quickened soul, who is exercised in the manner before described, to believe that he is in union with this living Head. But our Lord came to destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. When the sentence of God's holy law and the guilt of sin meet in the sinner's conscience, there is nothing that that poor sinner so much fears as death. How can it be otherwise? He feels that he is under the justly-merited wrath of God, and dreads the awful consequences of the Divine displeasure. Now, Christ came not only to deliver such from spiritual death,

by quickening them into life, but also to deliver them from that bondage, through the fear of death, to which they were subject. Many who are delivered from the state of death, continue to be much tried through the fear of death. This fear can be subdued only by the manifestation and enjoyment of God's pardoning love in Christ. It is the guilt of sin that produces the fear ; and this a poor sinner may experience, and yet have an earnest desire to come to Christ ; much secret love to His adorable Person may be shut up, as it were, in the poor tried one's heart. This experience is in Isaiah xlii. compared to the smoking flax. There is but little light, not much warmth, but a great deal of smoke ; which may intend those secret longings, thirstings, and pantings of soul for the Saviour, which are felt within ; for as smoke naturally rises, so the effects of a real work of grace are distinguished from all that is counterfeit, by the upward tendency thereof. That which begins in the flesh will end in the flesh, but that which comes from God always leads to Him. It is said : 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death,' and as this fountain springs up in the heart, so there is more spiritual life within.

But some of my dear friends will tell me that, like Job, they do not experience nearly so much spiritual life as they did in months that are past, and are sometimes afraid that the whole of their religion will come to nothing.—This very fear is allowed to work in you, among other uses, to make you more watchful, more observant of the state of your own soul. Unbelieving fear dishonours God, but a cautious fear is both salutary

and profitable. Let us fear, brethren, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. In a word, though death continues to work in us, yet all God's dealings with us, both spiritually and temporally, are designed for the crucifying of our old man. No small measure of spiritual life consists in our dying daily. But this is a riddle which we can never understand, until God is graciously pleased to give us some personal experience of it.

But I hasten.—‘The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.’ This will have its final accomplishment at the general resurrection. It is said : ‘Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power.’ The first resurrection may intend several things : as, 1. Our being raised up together with Christ : when He was raised for our justification, we also rose with and in Him, in a covenant sense. 2. When the dead hear the quickening voice of the Son of God at conversion, and live. 3. It is clear to me from the Scriptures that there will be hereafter two resurrections ; for ‘the dead in Christ shall rise first.’ We read of those who shall live and reign with Christ in the new heavens and new earth a thousand years ; but the rest of the dead will not live again till the thousand years are finished. And then shall death be swallowed up in eternal victory.

Two things will take place at the first resurrection. All the dead bodies of God's family, which were sown in corruption, in dishonour, in weakness, shall be raised in incorruption, in glory, and in power ; and

those who continue and are alive at the coming of the Lord shall be changed : ' For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' Then, and not till then, shall the saying that is written have its full accomplishment : ' Death is swallowed up in victory.'

What an encouraging expression is this ! Death shall be swallowed up. Yes ; death, with all its attendants, of sin, of sickness, of pain, of sorrow, of disappointment, of dissatisfaction, yea, of every evil work ; and all that has been, that still is, or that yet may be, distressing to the whole family of God, will, with death, be swallowed up for ever ; as it is written : ' I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be Thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction : repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.'

And is this, my dear friends, the blessed prospect which God hath set before us in the everlasting gospel of His Son ? It really is. Oh ! that He may give us the eye of faith and of an enlightened understanding to perceive it, and so to see our own interest in it as to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The sun always shines, but clouds of darkness often intervene between it and us. So it is with respect to our spiritual light. And as the earth, during the night, intercepts the light and heat of the sun from us, so sinful self and the world, in seasons of darkness, often hide from us the blessed prospect of that which is to come. But as the sun always appears

again, so our blessed Jesus, who is the Sun of righteousness, says in every season of darkness: 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Thus we go up and down, and in and out, and find pasture.—Still yours affectionately in the Lord, JOHN HOBBS.

CIX.

Cambridge Terrace, May 19, 1871.

To my dearly beloved Brethren and Sisters in Christ, connected with the little hill of Zion at Staining Lane.—I send you a few more fragments in an epistle. May they suit the appetite of those who, like the Syrophenician woman, are willing to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

I have been favoured with some profitable meditation on an often-repeated passage of God's most holy Word; and as I do not wish to eat my morsel alone, I send you some of the results.

Paul says, Romans viii. 28: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.'

We have here, 1. Certain persons spoken of, of whom we have a twofold description—they are said to love God, and to be the called according to His purpose. 2. It is affirmed that all things work together for their good. And, 3. The Apostle declares, We know this.

1. In the Word of God we find a great variety of terms by which the several members of Christ's church are described; and though God teaches them

all the same truths, yet are the manner, measure, and form of their experience of them often as various as their several countenances. Hence have we the many marks, evidences, and signs, yea, the different spots of God's children set forth in His most holy Word, that each may, through Divine mercy, from time to time find something suitable for himself, something descriptive of the path in which he has been led. Sometimes one portion of the Word of God is found most suitable, and at other times another, to the same individual, according to his present state and experience. But whatsoever teaching may be found useful to God's seeking family, Christ must be the All and in all of it.

Two characteristic marks are given in our text. First, those of whom the Apostle speaks are said to love God. The profitable use of all such descriptions is, when, after self-examination, we discover our deficiency of that which is set forth; or when, like Peter, we are enabled to say: 'Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' An abiding sense of our deficiency, of our shortcomings, will tend to keep us earnest in seeking for more love in our hearts; and when we can really say what Peter said, it will furnish a tribute of praise and thanksgiving to the glorious Fountain from which all our love flows, and an increased desire for more of that precious love in our hearts.

By nature, none of us had any love to God. It was impossible that we should have any, for two cannot walk together, except they are agreed. God is holy, righteous, good; but we are unholy, sinful,

and evil. God says: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.' He is light, we darkness; He is love, we are enmity against Him; yea, haters, and hating one another. Besides, we are entirely ignorant of Him, and we cannot possibly love that with which we are altogether unacquainted. Nothing is more common than for people to talk about loving God; but this is mere common-place speech, there is no reality in it. We *must* know Him in some measure, before we *can* love Him.

But some may be ready to say, Can we not learn all that it is necessary to know of God from the sacred Scriptures?—It is fully granted that much, very much, may be learned by reading, study, and meditation; but all who have been led by Divine teaching to know Him, are constrained to confess that their former knowledge of God was only of a general character, as it respects His dealings with the world at large, but there was nothing personal in it; that they did not feel their own condemnation as sinners; that they were strangers to that Divine teaching spoken of in Psalm xciv: 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law; that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.' And that in Isaiah: 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.' All natural religion and fleshly wisdom leave their possessor destitute of spiritual life; and consequently, whatever is known, is known only naturally; there is no

feeling in it. There is no humbling sense of the evil of sin, no personal fear of the Divine wrath.

When God is pleased, through the application of the law's sentence to a sinner's conscience, to convince him of sin, he begins to feel God's anger, and fears the consequences thereof. Now he knows God as an angry Judge, as a consuming fire. But he can never love Him as such ; no ; as the law reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, so it stirs up and discovers the carnal enmity of the sinner's heart against God : ' For the law worketh wrath.'

But our Lord says : ' Every man that hath ' thus ' heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' Yet not from his own natural choice ; because no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father. He cannot come to Christ (which is believing in Him), without some experience of the attracting influence of the Father's love ; for He says : ' No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' And the various methods by which God condescends to make known His precious love to poor sinners, are truly wonderful. They are too numerous for me to attempt to describe ; each of us who have felt the attracting power of that all-conquering love of His, however small the measure may seem to be, will be best able to trace it in his own experience. Sometimes the impressions are so gentle, that they are scarcely perceived. A single word, attended with Divine power to the heart, a solitary thought about Christ, a feeble desire after an interest in Him, a secret longing for further discoveries of Him, such are

some of the first workings of the secret love of God in a poor sinner's heart. For it is only with God's own love that we can ever love Him ; as John says : ' Not that we loved God, but that He loved us.'

And as the Lord condescends to go on discovering more and more of this precious love to us, by increasing our faith of interest in it, raising and encouraging our hope and expectation of it, so the desire of it, the experience of it, and the enjoyment of it, increase in our hearts. All this flows from, and is the effect of, an almighty power put forth in us, according to the promise : ' And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.'

Is there one amongst you whose secret language is : I hope I love Him, I almost think I do ; but yet I often fear, because my heart is so treacherous ? I must own that I am too often pleased with things which I know are not pleasing to my Lord.—Well, it is true that there is much cause for compunction of spirit and godly sorrow on account of this ; but despair will only displease Him the more ; because you must consider that He is not like one of us, who are hot and cold according to surrounding circumstances and feelings. His love is like Himself, unchangeable. What a proof have we of this in Peter's experience ! The Lord put that threefold searching question from love to him, to bring out a confession of Peter's love to his Lord. By this method the Saviour overcame those doubts and fears which, it is not unlikely, possessed the mind of Peter. The plain question,

‘Lovest thou me?’ drew forth that decided reply :
‘*Thou knowest that I love Thee.*’

Let me mention one thing more. Though you and I are such carnal fools that we are often carried away with vanity, can we not say, and that truly, that to be favoured with the Lord’s presence with us, whether in sickness or in health, in adversity or prosperity, affords us more real satisfaction than anything else ? Now, if we can stand this test in the presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, surely we must have some experimental knowledge of the Saviour’s love in our hearts ; and if it be there, it will certainly flow out to the glorious Fountain from which it is derived.

The second personal characteristic is, that those who thus love God, are the called according to His purpose. Here we have the doctrine of God’s eternal purpose concerning all persons and things. It is clear from the sacred Scriptures that there is a two-fold call spoken of. One has been denominated by good men the *common* or *general* call. To this the Saviour refers when He says : ‘ Many are called, but few chosen.’ And God says of such : ‘ When I called, none did answer ; when I spake, they did not hear.’ Nor can it be otherwise, unless the life-giving power of the Saviour’s voice attends the call.

The other call has been properly termed *special*, and is said in the text to be according to God’s purpose. This agrees with what follows : ‘ Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called : and whom

He called, them He also justified : and whom He justified, them He also glorified.' We have often heard what the Lord says in *Isaiah* : ' Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else.' Have we heard this, and other such scriptures, in a common-place sense, or has the word at any time been attended with a peculiar and personal power, spoken to us as individuals ?

Some may say, How shall I know this ?—If you have heard the word in the first sense only, it has passed away without notice, the whole Word of God being regarded by you alike, according to your usual habit of thinking of it. But if you have heard it in the second sense, you will know it by what follows : First, it has been attended with Divine light, discovering your true state as a sinner in the sight of a just and holy God ; and this light continues to make manifest God's work, as He is pleased to carry it on in you : ' The entrance of Thy words giveth light.' Secondly, if you have been called with a special call according to God's purpose, it will be known by its producing in you that which you are called unto. For example, Paul says : ' God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.' Those who are called by the word to have fellowship with Christ, will be favoured to experience, in some measure, conformity to Him in His sufferings, fellowship with Him in secret communion, the Saviour unfolding the secrets of His love to them, and they making known their wishes and desires to Him. When the Saviour calls poor sinners to come to Him, that call produces obedience ; it makes them willing

in the day of His power, willing to come to Him, to look to Him, to believe in Him, to love Him, to keep His commandments, to hold fast the form of sound doctrine as they have been taught ; in a word, to make Him their All and in all.

This holy calling is always efficacious, as Paul says : ' Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

In this lies the security of all spiritual obedience, that where the word of a King is, there is power ; that is, power to produce that which He calls for ; as in the creation, God said, ' Let there be light,' and there was light. The great distinction between the general call made in the Word, and that special call which is peculiar to God's family, is this, that the former is never obeyed, because of man's impotence ; and the latter is always effectual, sooner or later, being made so by the power of God.

2. Our text says that all things work together for good to the characters before described. This is a very broad assertion, '*all things*,' but it is strictly true. The experience of God's children would frequently seem to contradict it ; as in the instance of Jacob, who, when surrounded with an accumulation of afflictions, said : ' All these things are against me.' Jeremiah said : ' I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely

against me is He turned; He turneth His hand against me all the day.' And Job was so overwhelmed with affliction, that he said: 'If I had called, and He had answered me, yet would I not believe that He had heard me.'

My dear friends, all this arises from unbelief, and is no contradiction to the assertion contained in our text, which is elsewhere confirmed by the words: 'All things are for your sakes.'

There are some who have said, Is it possible that *sin* can be among the 'all things' that work together for good to God's covenant family?—Take Paul's assertion as to this matter: 'God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.' God, and God alone, can make all things work together for His people's good. Adam, by his sin, lost for himself and all his posterity that Paradise, that perfect state of happiness which he had at his creation. But everlasting love, infinite wisdom, and almighty power took a glorious advantage of man's fall, to bestow upon him greater blessings and a more exalted state of happiness than he had, or ever could have had, before the fall.

God's family are through grace brought into a much nearer relation with Him than Adam enjoyed in his state of innocence. He knew God as his Creator, but we know Him as our Father; his righteousness and holiness were created, but the righteousness and holiness of the saints are the righteousness and holiness of God our Saviour; his was an earthly Paradise, ours a heavenly inheritance; his was in-

trusted to himself, and was lost by him ; ours is secured to us in Christ, by the oath and promise of God, and can never be lost. Under the first covenant, Adam was a partaker of many spiritual blessings and gifts ; but by the second covenant, our Maker became our Husband, partook of the children's flesh and blood, and thus became Immanuel, God with us. He has given to the church promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Much more of the love of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is displayed in redemption, than could be manifested in creation. By virtue of that union which is brought about between the Saviour and His church, all the saints are brought much nearer to God than Adam was at his creation.

All the various trials, afflictions, sorrows, and distresses, both temporal and spiritual, to which man is subject, are the fruits and effects of his disobedience ; so that the most favoured of God's family often write bitter things against themselves. But whatever may be our fears, our condition is far better than it ever could have been, if Adam had not been permitted to fall. Here is no justification of sin in any of us ; it is that cursed thing which God abhors, and which all who are taught of God desire not only to have pardoned, but to be kept from : 'Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.' None but our God could make all things work together for our good.

His chastening rod, however painful to flesh and blood, is one of the evidences of His peculiar love : 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.' It is an

evidence of our sonship : ' If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.' It is by afflictions that we are conformed to the image of the Saviour. If we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together. Paul says : ' Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

One of the worst things that seem to be against us is the remains of indwelling sin. Although there is nothing that can cause the saints so much pain, yet even this is, through the wisdom, love, and power of our gracious God and Saviour, overruled for our good. Read the twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians, where Paul says : ' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong.'

My brethren, who is he that will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good ? Strictly speaking, there is nothing that can finally hurt the Saviour's family. And why ? Because nothing can separate them from His love.

And whereas it is said, ' *All* things work together for good,' &c., this is designed to take off our minds from being too much employed about any one particular circumstance or providence, and to lead us to a *general* view and consideration of God's dealings with us. Every part of His work, whether of grace or providence, is necessary to the completion of His purposes of love and favour towards us. If one part of the work were omitted, the whole could not be accomplished. There is a beautiful chain by which one event is connected with another. This, if the

Lord is pleased to lead us to it, can be clearly traced in the history of Joseph. If such trials as were appointed had not befallen him, he could not have been brought to the enjoyment of those blessings which he afterwards experienced. If we are favoured at times to meditate upon God's uniform dealings with ourselves, we shall probably find something of this '*working*' in our own experience. It is not profitable when we are left to dwell upon this trial, or the other affliction *alone*; but rather as Moses says: 'Thou shalt remember *all* the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee.' It is *all things*, that is, God's whole work in us and concerning us, *all* events taken together, that work together for our good.

Both Tyndale and the Geneva Bible express it thus: 'We know that all things work *for the best* to them that love God,' &c. So that God has led us not only in a good and right way, but in the very best, the most suitable, the most profitable path for us; that which above all others was fitted for the accomplishment of the design of His eternal love towards us. He says: 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.' So that we may scripturally conclude that if any part of His dealings with us could have been omitted, His own glory by our eternal welfare could not have been fully displayed.

Yes, my dear brethren, whatever may be our present thoughts and views, all that He has done, is doing, and will do, for every member, yea, for the

whole of His church, is necessary to the accomplishment of His own eternal purpose.

3. Paul says: '*We know* that all things work together,' &c. This knowledge is twofold. First, general, as derived from the sacred Scriptures, wherein God's whole work, whether of creation, providence, or grace, is affirmed to be good; as He that is essential goodness cannot do anything that is not, like Himself, truly good. And secondly, from that inward teaching whereby He condescends to assure our poor, rebellious, doubting hearts of His good will towards us in Christ Jesus. We cannot derive this knowledge from each other; it is the effect of God's own secret work in our hearts, whereby He subdues all the erroneous thoughts, ideas, conceptions, and feelings which we naturally entertain concerning Him and his various dispensations towards us. He brings us by little and little to see, to feel, to acknowledge, and to confess, that He has led us by a right way; and I believe we shall be constrained at last to say, notwithstanding all our perverseness and rebellion, that He has done all things well. Such has been the testimony of that cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, and by which we are surrounded. And as He never failed any of them, nor has ever failed us hitherto, what a sad thing it is, that we, through unbelief and carnal fear, should so often doubt of His continued faithfulness unto the end. But, blessed be God! our faith, through His faithfulness, shall triumph over all opposition, and all His family shall be made more than conquerors through Him that hath loved them.

Still there may be some one of us yet ready to say, Yes, all but me. There is something about me different from any other of His family.—Ah! my dear friends, these suggestions come from a cruel enemy and a doubting heart. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Not a hoof shall be left behind. And therefore even you and I shall be found among those of whom He has said: ‘Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.’ Amen. So be it.

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

CX.

Cambridge Terrace, May 25, 1871.

To my dear Brethren and Companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ.—May grace, mercy, and peace be with you all in Him. Amen.

I was disappointed last Lord’s Day in not coming among you. All was ready, but there was no cab to be had. Constrained to acknowledge the hand of God in this matter, I was enabled to look to Him for some portion of His Word; and He was graciously pleased to give me the following words of good old Jacob: ‘I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.’

The forty-ninth chapter of Genesis contains an account of the patriarch’s blessing pronounced on his sons and their posterity, in the midst of which he breaks off to speak of himself, in the words of our

text; from which we may learn, that whatever interested the saints of old with respect to others, it was personal religion that they were continually seeking after.

First, I will, as the Lord is pleased to enable me, say something about Jacob: secondly, concerning salvation: and thirdly, what it is to wait for it.

I. As it respects Jacob. We are told by the Apostle that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. To read the history of God's dealings with His people of old, may afford entertainment to the mind, but it can be profitable to us only as we are enabled to trace some analogy between their experience and our own. First we might speak of Jacob personally, then in regard to his natural posterity, also as it respects his spiritual seed, and then as he was a type; but for brevity's sake we shall blend these together.

Let me observe that scripture types are always inferior to their antitype, and therefore we must not look for a perfect agreement between them. Jacob was a type of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (see Ps. xxiv). Speaking of the Lord's people, David says: 'This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.' Jacob in a literal sense cannot be intended; no, it is that adorable Saviour to whom all the prophets gave witness. God calls Jacob His son: 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt;' and our dear Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ is His only-begotten Son. God says : 'Jacob have I loved ;' and of the Saviour He says : 'This is my beloved Son.' Jacob and his posterity were God's chosen people ; and of Christ He says : 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.' Jacob was descended from Abraham ; and Christ was made of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Jacob sprang from Isaac, who was the heir of promise ; and our Lord is Heir of all things ; all the promises of God are in Him. Jacob had not only a natural seed, but the Gentiles, who are not his children according to the flesh, are to assume his name : 'One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ;' and all that are Christ's, whether Jews or Gentiles, are the seed of Abraham. Jacob obtained the name of Israel, through wrestling with God in prayer ; and our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when upon earth, prayed for His whole family, and now He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

One characteristic mark of this family is, that they are all of them a praying people ; yes, and notwithstanding all their fears and unbelief, a prevailing people also, though, like Jacob, they have often to wait long for God's salvation. Yet sooner or later they must obtain it. For, 'Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them ?' The Saviour says : 'I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.'

II. I was to speak about that salvation which Jacob waited for. And first, the term *salvation* necessarily implies that those who are saved were in a lost condition. This is true with respect to the whole human family. And secondly, if Jacob *waited* for God's salvation, he must have had a personal knowledge of his lost estate and of his need of salvation, for no one will ever wait for that which he does not need or wish for.

I shall consider the various branches of God's salvation as all comprised in our being saved from sin, for it is through sin, original and actual, that we were all lost; yes, even Jacob and his spiritual seed, which includes the whole election of grace.

God's salvation is threefold. 1. It stands in His eternal purpose to save some of Adam's lost race; for, for God to will and to perform is inseparable. Hence the whole work of salvation was complete in Christ, in God's everlasting love, in God's eternal purpose, and in the covenant of grace, before the world began. God calleth those things which be not as though they were, because He has willed them to be, and therefore they must be.

2. The whole work of salvation was finished by our Lord Jesus Christ when He hung upon the cross. It was then that He said: 'It is finished.' He had, by His perfect conformity to the requirements of God's holy law, and by His complete obedience to its precepts, wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness for all His family, thus freeing them from all future demands. By His precious death He sustained the full sentence

of the law, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' Christ poured out His soul unto death. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and virtually, in a covenant sense, by the shedding of His precious blood He cleansed His people from all their filthiness and from all their unrighteousness.

3. There is a third sense in which salvation is to be considered, even that salvation which Jacob waited for, and for which all his spiritual seed do wait—that is, a glorious manifestation thereof to every one of them individually; as Jacob says, 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.' When a poor, lost, ruined, undone sinner hears the word of the gospel, which is good news from a far country, and sets forth the fulness, freeness, and all-sufficiency of God's great salvation, and when faith comes by hearing, so that he believes the report, feeling and knowing that he is a sinner, he begins to wait for the pardon of his sins. For though he may fully believe that Christ came into the world to save sinners, yet he is obliged to wait until the Saviour is pleased to fulfil in his behalf that prophetic work which is described in Isaiah lxi, where He says: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in

Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.'

In this scripture we have a full account of the Saviour's commission, as the great Prophet of His church, as also a description of those to whom He was sent. Elsewhere He says: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' It is repenting sinners who are constrained to wait for the forgiveness of their sins; of which they have a scriptural evidence, when through grace they are so enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as to be delivered from that slavish fear of the Divine wrath, which has hitherto prevented their drawing nigh to God. The convinced sinner realizes the truth of the scripture which says: 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.' Nothing but the pardon of sin, through believing in a crucified Saviour, will enable him to come boldly unto the throne of grace. He may, being a partaker of spiritual life, have often cried for deliverance, but slavish fear and servile dread, through unbelief, have hitherto kept him at a distance from God. But when such a measure of faith is wrought in his heart, as enables him to say, with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God,' thus believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, he receives knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. When sin is thus pardoned, its guilt is removed from the conscience. Not that he ever for-



gets what a sinner he is ; but faith believes that the precious blood of Christ cleanseth him from all sin.

This is attended with Divine love shed abroad in his heart. As the Saviour says in Luke vii. of her who was a great sinner : ‘ Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.’ The forgiveness of sins is the blessed consequence of God’s everlasting love to poor sinners, and it is sure to produce, as its fruit and effect, much love in their hearts to Him.

Another effect of the forgiveness of sin is to cast out the love of sin from the sinner’s heart. What was once his delight, he now hates. Like Job, he is constrained to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Also the ruling power of sin is subdued ; for though it still continues to work in him, it has not the dominion over him. It can no longer reign either in his will or in his heart. All the evil that is still found in him is contrary to him, that is, as he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. Paul says : ‘ If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.’

Now, though the Lord’s family are, in a greater or less degree, blessed with this religion, yet are they all found, like Jacob, to be still waiting for God’s salvation ; because, though the work of grace in every believer is good and perfect in its kind, being the work of God, yet is it not complete as to measure. All who have received grace from the fulness of Christ, are still waiting for more grace.

When Jacob said, 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord,' I believe that he meant he was waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of God, made to Abraham, Isaac, and himself, concerning the Messiah, in whom it was declared that all the families of the earth should be blessed. That the patriarchs saw by faith the advent of the Saviour, is clear from what Himself says to the Jews : 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.' This was by faith, through that Divine revelation that was made to them. They all waited for it, but did not witness its accomplishment. They lived by faith upon the promise, and thus they waited for God's salvation.

We, who are under the New Testament dispensation, to whom the promise of the Saviour's incarnation has been fulfilled, are still waiting for the further fulfilment of the promise which our Lord has left upon record. He said to His disciples : 'I will see you again ;' and to His whole church : 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.' It is to receive visits from Him through the various means He has been pleased to appoint, it is to enjoy more of His presence here, that we are waiting. We wait for God's salvation when we wait for the Saviour, for He is the sum and substance, the All and in all of our salvation.

Again : The Saviour commanded His disciples 'that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me.' This they did, until the day of Pentecost was fully come, when this promise had its



blessed fulfilment in the outpouring of the Spirit. For this they waited; and we, too, are waiting for the refreshing, reviving, restoring, and comforting power and influence of the ever-blessed Spirit. They did not wait in vain, nor shall we; for the Saviour promises: I will send you 'another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.' Thus all the spiritual seed of Jacob are, like him, brought to wait for God's salvation.

Once more: I believe that salvation from sin includes deliverance from all its consequences and effects. How very numerous are these. All the sorrow of heart, the grief of spirit, the inward disappointments, fears, and distresses, to which all men are liable, even the seed of Israel as well as the rest, together with all the outward trials, sicknesses, pains, losses, crosses, vexations, and all things that are against us, and contrary to us, are the immediate fruits and effects of sin; and salvation from sin includes our *final* deliverance from all these evils. For though many of the Lord's dear children are appointed to drink deeply and largely of the cup of affliction, yet none of these things shall, or can, finally harm them. For Christ is a *perfect* Saviour, not only from sin, but from all its effects, death itself being included.

And does not our whole life, that is, since we have been called by Divine grace, produce a confirmation of what Jacob said: 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord?' Many of us, who have been called to pass from one furnace into another, have been almost constantly engaged in waiting for a succession of deliverances. No sooner saved from one trial, than

another has followed ; as our Lord says : ‘ If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily.’ Thus, like Jacob, we are still waiting for God’s salvation, sometimes from one trouble, and sometimes from another. And hitherto, can we not say with Joshua, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us ? Then, as Mr. Hart says,

‘ Trust Him, He will not deceive us,
Though we hardly of Him deem ;
He will never, never leave us,
Nor will let us quite leave Him.’

III. A few words on *waiting*. Jeremiah says : ‘ It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.’ There are two kinds of waiting spoken of in Scripture ; waiting *upon* God, and waiting *for* Him. It is a blessed privilege to be enabled to wait upon God, in reading and hearing His Word, in meditating therein, in attending the ordinances of His house, in prayer, and in keeping His commandments. The Saviour says : ‘ If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ But the second kind of waiting is intended in our text ; waiting for God to manifest Himself to us in our salvation. My natural disposition is very hasty and impatient. I often find that *waiting* for the fulfilment of God’s promises is a sore trial. I have much need of patience ; but this is the sovereign gift of Him who is called in Scripture ‘ the God of patience.’

Our waiting for God’s salvation is the effect of His waiting to be gracious unto us ; as it is written : ‘ And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be

gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you ; for the Lord is a God of judgment : blessed are all they that wait for Him.' What wonderful condescension is this, that the Most High should wait for the proper time to help and save His afflicted children !

But the poor tried child of God is ready to say, When will that time arrive ? I answer, When the time appointed by Jehovah for the accomplishment of every promise is fully come. Jacob and the rest of the Old Testament saints waited for God's salvation, but nothing could hasten its accomplishment before the time appointed. But, the poor tried one will say, I often fear that I shall not be able to wait until that time comes.—Remember what the Lord says : 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass ; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.' Furthermore, the Lord tells us in His Word when He will fulfil His promises in our behalf. Mark the following declaration : 'For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.' It has been truly said that man's extremity is God's opportunity. Those who, like Jacob, wait for God's salvation, whether it be in a temporal or spiritual sense, do so because they know and feel their need of it. They do so, because they know they cannot save themselves, and because they are persuaded that God is able to help and save them, if He will ; as the leper said : 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.'

When we wait for God's salvation, it does not

imply that we are unacquainted with it—we cannot prize that which we are altogether ignorant of—but knowing, through Divine teaching, that it is all in Christ, we become like the merchantman in our Lord's parable, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. And cannot we remember how we once waited, first for one thing and then for another? Yet could we never find real satisfaction in anything, until we heard of, until we found the Lord Jesus Christ, who is intended by the pearl of great price. Then, like Moses, we were taught to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, and found indeed that Christ and His salvation were worth waiting for.

That we may truly wait for God's salvation, we have need of patience. This, as I have said before, is God's gift, and the method He takes to produce it in us often seems very strange. Paul says: '*Tribulation* worketh patience, and patience experience,' &c.

Having had some sweet taste and discovery of the goodness of God, we long for more. Having received some of the firstfruits, we are made willing and desirous to wait for the harvest. Faith not only receives what God is graciously pleased to put into her hand, but she looks forward to, and expects, future favours and blessings. She is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. What faith believes, hope expects. When David was in deep trouble, he said: 'Why art thou

cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him.' By faith he believed that God would deliver him, and therefore he hoped in Him. Thus faith and hope are concerned about things future; as Paul says: 'We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' Thus we see that faith, hope, and patience are all necessary to our waiting aright for God's salvation.

The encouragement afforded in the Word to every seeking soul, to be found thus waiting for God's salvation, is very great indeed; first, from the declaration of God Himself: 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me,' and many other gracious promises to the same purpose: and secondly, from the recorded experience of all the saints that have gone before us. They all with one accord bore their dying testimony to God's faithfulness. 'These all died in faith.' 'The righteous hath hope in his death.' What did they believe and hope for? Certainly God's salvation.

May each of us, my dear friends, be found, like Jacob, waiting for God's salvation. Waiting, seeking, and finding, are inseparable, according to the Word of God. Wisdom says: 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.'

The good Lord bless you all.—Yours affectionately
in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

CXL.*

Cambridge Terrace, May 28, 1871.

To all my dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ, who may find the path in which they are called to walk traced out in this letter, I wish God speed.

According to Paul, the only way to the kingdom of heaven is through much tribulation ; and those whom John saw arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands, came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not that we are to suppose that all who suffer affliction in this world are thereby assured of an entrance into the kingdom of heaven ; because all the suffering, whether bodily or mental, that is common to man, is the certain evidence of God's displeasure against sin. Where there is no sin, there can be no suffering. But the tribulation intended by Paul is, those sufferings which are peculiar to the Saviour and His family.

I have been meditating a little upon our Lord's words : 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' (Luke xxii. 28-30.) This was spoken to the disciples who were then present, but by no means limited to

* There was no opportunity afforded to the writer for the revision of this unfinished letter, but it is given on account of the interest attaching to the last words he addressed to his flock.

them. Our Lord's sayings were intended for the use and comfort of His whole church, down to the end of time. He says, when addressing the Father (John xvii. 20): 'Neither pray I for these alone' (that is, for the disciples present), 'but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.'

'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations,' &c. Temptation is variously understood in the Scriptures. It is often taken for the many trials, afflictions, and sufferings of God's family; in which sense we must understand James (ch. i. 2-4): 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.' And again, in the twelfth verse: 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.'

Now, I take the Saviour's temptations to be set forth, first, by His wonderful condescension; that the eternal Son of God, who is over all, God blessed for ever, should have been pleased to take a nature so very inferior to His own into union with His Divine Person, when He took upon Himself the children's flesh and blood. For when it is said that in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, it was not merely dwelling in a tabernacle or temple so very inferior to Himself, but it was taking the nature of His people into real union with Himself, so as to become part of Himself, His very Self. By this He

showed His wonderful, incomprehensible love to His covenant family. By this the indescribable love of Jehovah, in all His glorious Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, was openly displayed : the Father's love in the gift of His Son—'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,' &c.—the Son's, in His taking into union with Himself that holy portion of the children's flesh and blood which the Father had prepared for Him ; and the Spirit's love, in revealing and making known this great mystery of godliness, in the souls of His regenerated family.

Secondly : In that, as God and Man in one adorable Person, He took upon Himself the form of a servant ; as Himself said : 'Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth ? Is not he that sitteth at meat ? But I am among you as he that serveth.' As Mediator, He became the Father's servant, to obey His holy law, and to fulfil the whole will of God ; as it is written : 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.' That He has condescended to serve His people, was made quite plain, by His washing the disciples' feet ; indeed, He has done everything for us ; He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, for us. No heart can conceive, no tongue can describe, the wonderful sufferings of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as Man and Mediator. In these, taken all together, consist what our Lord calls, 'My temptations.'

He suffered from men. As soon as His birth was made known, Herod sought to destroy Him ; and though He came as the Messenger of peace from heaven, declaring God's good-will to men, His enemies

rejected and contradicted all that He said : the scribes and Pharisees ascribed the miracles He performed to Satan ; and though His whole life was spotless and pure, He was called a gluttonous man, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. Bless His precious name ! He is indeed the Friend of sinners, but not in the sense intended by His enemies. Many heard, and believed on Him for a time ; but, when the word was too searching for them, they went back, and walked no more with Him. And this, my dear friends, would have been your case and mine, if He had not condescended to open our hearts to receive His precious word. One who followed Him in profession, and obtained the office of an apostle, betrayed Him. The Jewish nation and its rulers demanded that He should be put to death ; and the unjust Roman governor passed the awful sentence, though he was obliged to confess that he found no fault in Him. Thus did the Saviour suffer the cruel, painful, shameful, ignominious, and cursed death of the cross, at the hands of His enemies among mankind.

Again : None ever suffered from the wrath of God due to sin like the Saviour. It was not the sins of one person only that were laid upon Him, but all the sins of the whole elect world ; as it is written : ‘The Lord hath laid upon Him’ (margin, “caused to meet upon Him”) ‘the iniquity of us all.’ Now, as all the sins of His chosen were laid upon Him—He being made sin for us, who knew no sin—all the punishment that was due to sin, He condescended to bear. He who came to display, to exercise, mercy towards poor sinners, Himself received no mercy.

God's holiness, the strictness of Divine justice, could allow of no mercy to Him who had undertaken to be the Surety of His people, to pay all their debts, and to suffer in their stead.

The sufferings and death of the Saviour were the greatest trial that love ever sustained: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' This love was strong, yea, stronger than death. With the full prospect of all this weight of sorrow and suffering before Him in the garden, the Saviour never hesitated for one moment, never drew back from the trial, the temptation, that was before Him,—

'With all His sufferings full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the taste His spirit flew ;
'Twas love that urged Him on.'

Connected with this is the suffering which the Saviour endured from the Father's forsaking of Him, as He said: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' None other could ever suffer from this like the Saviour, because His love to the Father was perfect, His delight in the Father complete, His communion with the Father more close and intimate than any beside Himself can enjoy. His very meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work; and therefore none could ever feel spiritual desertion, that state of darkness which was, as it were, spread over the whole soul of the Saviour, that withholding of the Divine approbation, that keeping back of all Divine consolation which He experienced, as *He* felt it. No tempta-

tions can ever be like *His* temptations, as to measure and extent.

Again: The Saviour suffered temptation from Satan; that is, the devil tried whether he could draw Him into sin. But this was altogether impossible, for in Him is no sin at all. There was nothing for Satan to work upon. Our Lord said: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.' Nor could Satan, with all his diabolical force and wiles, infuse any evil into Him. The old serpent could make no impression upon this blessed Rock. Yet the Saviour suffered much from the united malice of devils and men. He said to His betrayers and murderers: 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.'

Again: The sufferings of this wonderful Sufferer were finished by death. And this was His own voluntary act. He gave His life a ransom for many. He suffered temporal death, in the separation of the soul from the body; as it is written: 'He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.' He suffered spiritual death, in what He experienced through the withholding of God's presence from Him. And having thus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, death no longer remained. There can be no *eternal* death, when sin is removed. Sin was the procuring cause of death; therefore, if the cause no longer exists, its effects must cease. Death is thus swallowed up in victory.

'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.' This, as has been already noticed, is not limited to those disciples who heard it spoken by

our Lord, but is applicable to all the followers of the Lamb in all ages. These disciples were witnesses of the Saviour's sufferings, as Peter affirms of himself. (1 Pet. v. 1.) There is a twofold sense in which the followers of Christ may be said to continue with Him in His temptations. First, as they are all appointed to partake experimentally of their Lord's sufferings; as Himself speaks: 'Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized.' And Paul says that if we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together. And again: 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' Thus to suffer with Christ is comprehended in what He says Himself: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'

Did He suffer from the enmity of the world, both Jews and Gentiles? He tells His followers: 'Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.' But it may be objected by some, that though this might be so in the unenlightened and barbarous ages, yet in these more refined days, when knowledge is more generally diffused, though men may differ in their views about religion, this does not produce enmity. What a mistake is this! Do not the most refined Roman Catholics still believe that if they can destroy Protestant heretics, they are doing God service? But this enmity is not confined to Papists only; for as the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, so he can never heartily, cordially, and sincerely receive those who

are truly born of God. There is, and can be, no real union between unbelievers and believers. True Christians do not hate the world; no, they would rejoice, if it were the will of God, to know that all men were brought to the knowledge of the truth. But however they may desire this, they cannot, they dare not affirm the doctrine of universal redemption, or of universal salvation, because it is contrary to Divine revelation, and to the inward teaching of the Spirit of God in their own hearts.

Did the Saviour suffer in His own sacred Person, as our Surety, the displeasure of God revealed against sin? Now, though God does not punish His dear children for sin in a vindictive sense, yet He makes every one of them to feel, by teaching them out of His holy law, that it is a bitter thing to depart from Him; that they all deserve eternal punishment, for, and on account of sin. It is now that the Saviour appears to a poor sinner what He really is, a Friend in need, and a Friend indeed. For, as the convinced sinner's transgressions are all removed from him, and imputed to the Saviour by God the Father, so have all vindictive wrath and punishment passed away from the sinner, having been borne by his Surety.

But, as the Saviour suffered *for* sin, those who are justified from all things from which they could never be justified by the law of Moses, do suffer, and will continue to suffer as long as they live, *from* sin. Though its guilt may be purged from the conscience, its inbeing continues to be one of

the heaviest burdens that a saved sinner is called to sustain. Paul deeply felt what he wrote to the Romans: 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' though he could at the same time, in the very next words, say: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Did the Saviour suffer from the powers of darkness? Surely none who are delivered from the usurped dominion of the strong man armed, are strangers to the fiery darts of the wicked one. Though Satan cannot lead us captive at his will, yet he can, and does, continually distress us with his inward assaults. Unbelief, rebellion, discontent, impatience, fretfulness, and even our bad tempers, are stirred up by Satan, all these being his work within us. The old man of sin and his father the devil will always work together. But, blessed be God! sin shall not have dominion over us, and the Lord will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

Did the Saviour, by the suffering of death, change it from a vindictive sentence to a new covenant blessing, with respect to His whole family? (for Paul says: 'All things are yours, whether life or death.') Yet the dear children of God often suffer much from the *fear* of death with all its attendant circumstances.

Thus have we seen that the saints are partakers of Christ's sufferings. And as they are in covenant union with Him, and this union can never be broken, they continue with Him in His temptations. Brought by the Lord Himself into the path of tribulation, they must and shall continue

in it unto the end. I do not believe that any of us who have been called to walk in this path, would really wish to be out of it ; because, if this were possible, we must part company with the Saviour, and lose the supporting presence of our best Beloved. We may sometimes wish that we could escape from some especial trial appointed for us ; we may, like Christian, for a time mistake Bypath Meadow for the right way ; but, finding that every false way only leads to Despair and Doubting Castle, we would not, when in our right mind, choose any other path than that which the Lord has appointed for us, however smooth the one, and rough the other may appear.

For us thus to abide with the Lord in all these things even to the end, is to continue with Him in His temptations.

APPENDIX.

LETTERS TO FRIENDS.

I.

(To Mr. R. and Miss T.)

Cobham, December 20, 1825.

My dear Friends whom I love in the Lord Jesus Christ,—May the God of all mercies and the Father of all comforts abundantly bless you with an endearing sense of His supporting presence, under the present trying dispensation with which He has seen good to exercise your faith and patience, and which was made known to me by our esteemed friend Mr. L. I could not help dropping the sympathetic tear; and this, my beloved, you and I are allowed, for Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. But, bless His precious name! my faith can trace the happy spirit of our departed sister to the regions of eternal day, where I shall follow her in the Lord's appointed time, and where the inhabitants of that land shall no more say, I am sick; for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

It is a privilege when we know that a saint

has fallen asleep in Jesus: and if the good Lord has been pleased to gather home to Himself her whom He hath loved with an everlasting love, whom He hath called in time, washed in His most precious blood, and made meet for eternal glory, the exercise to those who are still in the body is not unlike that through which He caused His beloved disciples to pass of old. He had long been with them, had unfolded to them the secret love of His heart, and had sweetly engaged their affections to Himself by every endearing manifestation; and after all this, He told them: 'It is expedient for you that I go away;' at the hearing of which sorrow filled their hearts. Nor could it be otherwise, from the pure love they bore to Him, produced by a sweet sense of His precious love to them. But He told them He would see them again, and they should rejoice, and their joy no man should take from them.

And this, my beloved, will be the happy experience of all those who love Jesus in this world. He will often visit them with His soul-satisfying, heart-cheering presence, yea, they shall see the King in His beauty, and their eyes shall behold the land that is very far off. Our Beloved goes down into His garden, He feeds among the spices, and gathers His lilies one by one, each of which is laid in the bosom of everlasting love.

Oh! how sweet it is to have the soul alive to a sight and sense of the sufferings of Christ; to feel that His sufferings are ours, and that our afflictions are His. His precious love, brought home to

the soul, and received by faith, so as for us to know and believe the love that God hath to us, will more than counterbalance every trial; for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, even so also our consolation aboundeth by Christ.

But if my dear friends have not been brought to rest fully on the everlasting love of God, so as for a precious sense thereof to cast out all fear at times, yet I do hope they are favoured to feel that the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of grace and supplication, helps their infirmities at a throne of grace, with groanings that cannot be uttered, enabling them to plead earnestly with the Lord. And this, my beloved, will work life in your souls, draw forth your desires to that which is spiritual, crucify you to all temporal prospects, and afford that abiding consolation which will keep you hoping, seeking, and pleading, until He enables you to say: 'My Beloved is mine, and I am His.'

My dear Miss T., I am very sensible that the present dispensation with which the good Lord has been pleased to visit you in addition to your own indisposition, must be deeply felt, and I can truly sympathize with you. But the love of Christ is quite sufficient to supply every want, and make the soul to rejoice, even in the deepest tribulation. I have been very much led out for you at a throne of grace, and I do hope that the good Lord will make and keep you very earnest in pleading there. 'Lord, save, or I perish!' when it comes from the heart, under a real sight and sense of need, has always been found prevalent with the Lord; for

He never says to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek ye me in vain.' If He enables you to cry mightily to Him, and condescends to give you a sweet answer of peace in the joy of your heart, you will find that it will work resignation and submission to His sovereign good pleasure.

I hope you will be favoured to be more earnest with the Lord about your eternal state, than even about the recovery of your outward man. This indeed, if it is the Lord's will, I am enabled to pray He will bring about also, in His own time: but what I mean is, I do hope your chief desire, heart, and affections, will be supremely engaged with Him. Your trials have not been sent in vain. If the Lord is pleased to raise you up, you will have much of His goodness to remember, and be thankful for. What a privilege that He should deal with you as with His children; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son or daughter whom He receiveth.

May the good Lord enable you to watch your own heart, for out of it are the issues of life. Satan may seek to overwhelm you with overmuch sorrow, or he may at times attract your thoughts, attention, and heart, with the pleasing contemplation of your recovery—anything to keep you from Christ. But if, my beloved, you are enabled to fall into His hands, to be at His absolute disposal, either for life or for death, to feel after the sweet impressions of His love in your own heart, and simply to aim at His glory, you will indeed find that He is faithful. He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

But I must conclude. And what shall I more say to my dear friends? The Lord hear them in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend them, send them help from the sanctuary, and strengthen them out of Zion. I hope to be found constantly besieging a throne of grace on your behalf. It is the sweetest privilege to bear our own and each other's burdens there. Finally, my beloved, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus. My love be with you all in Him. Amen.

JOHN HOBBS.

II.

(To Mr. and Mrs. F.)

Bognor, August 10, 1854.

My dear Friends,—Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

You will, I know, be glad to hear that, through the Lord's goodness, my dear wife is better than when she left home, and that I am on the whole deriving the benefit I had hoped for from this change.

O my dear friends, God is faithful, by whom we have been called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship intends, first, a conformity to Him, a being planted together in the likeness of His death, and in the likeness of His resurrection. Our

old man is crucified with Him. He was delivered up to Divine justice for our offences, and through the efficacy of His death, applied by Divine power to the conscience and revealed in the heart, we become crucified to sin, to self, and to the world. How then shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?

Secondly, fellowship signifies communion. This we enjoy by the Saviour manifesting Himself to faith. The ever-blessed Spirit operates both as the Spirit of life and of light, and it is through this heavenly influence that we feel and discern our need of a Saviour. The Holy Spirit goes on to testify of Christ; and He is revealed to faith in the glory of His Person, the fulness of His grace, the efficacy of His atonement, and the sufficiency of His righteousness. Now the poor sinner cries: 'My Lord and my God!' and the Saviour says: 'Let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.' How many earnest cries proceed from the heart of the poor and needy from time to time, and what rich and gracious answers are received from His Sacred Majesty!

Thirdly, fellowship intends a community of interest in the same blessings. The love of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, is the source and substance of all real union between the Saviour and poor sinners, who are saved by grace alone. His God and Father, as He is Man and Mediator, is our God and Father: we are made heirs of God, and joint-heirs in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ.

Now God hath called us to this fellowship, or we should never have known anything about it, or have had any desire after it, or delight in it. He who hath thus called us is faithful, who also will do it. May my dear friends abound in the knowledge and experience of this religion.

With our united Christian love to our kind friends and family, I remain, theirs affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

III.

(To Mr. and Mrs. F.)

Brighton, October 21, 1857.

My dear Friends,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with you. I have delayed writing until now, having experienced many changes in my health; and now, through the Lord's goodness, I feel better, and hope to return home on Thursday. I have much to remind me that this is not my rest, because it is polluted; that here we have no continuing city; but I would seek one to come, whose builder and maker is God. Walking by faith, and not by sight, is the path in which He leads His people; which faith is His own gift, and it is often most in exercise when we perceive it the least.

Abraham endured afflictions, temptations, and various other trials of faith, as seeing Him who is invisible. Now, Abraham's God is the God of all his spiritual seed; and if we be Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Such, through grace, is my hope, and it is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entereth into that within the veil.

That my kind friends may live in the enjoyment of His smile, whose presence is better than life, is the earnest desire of, theirs affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

IV.

(To Mr. and Mrs. H., on their Marriage.)

Stockwell, January 19, 1858.

My dear Friends,—I greet you in the Lord, because I love you both in the Lord.

I cannot wish you to be exempt from a daily cross, for such would be contrary to the Saviour's word, nor could it be for your profit: but I do most sincerely desire that as your days, so your strength may be; that it may please Him who once graced a marriage with His personal presence, and by a miracle manifested forth His glory, to consecrate and bless your union, and that He will be pleased to make it profitable to both of my dear friends.

May you remember that, whether married or single, if you would experience true happiness and solid peace, Jesus must be your All in all.—Yours affectionately in Him,

JOHN HOBBS.

V.

(To Mr. and Mrs. F.)

Brighton, October 14, 1858.

My dear Friends,—May the Shepherd of Israel have both you and yours in His continual keeping, guidance, care, and protection. Amen.

Knowing that you will be glad to hear from us, I am enabled, through the goodness of God, to say

that I am improving in health, and have been gaining a little strength for the last ten days ; I can now walk a mile without fatigue. It may be the will of Him whose I am, and whose I desire to be, to continue me a little longer in His church below. I earnestly wish in this, as in everything else, to be enabled to say, 'Not my will, but His, be done.'

Submission to the will of God is a very precious gift. No man can attain to it by any effort of the mind. It flows from a manifestation of God's pardoning mercy, love, grace, and favour, discovered to faith ; from a blessed assurance of personal interest in the many endearing covenant characters and relations borne by the Saviour toward His poor redeemed family ; as that of a Husband, Father, Brother, Friend, Shepherd, Physician, and Redeemer ; who forgiveth all their iniquities, and healeth all their diseases, who redeemeth their life from destruction, who crowneth them with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

Furthermore, submission to the will of God springs from faith's view of the Saviour's sufferings, who Himself bore our sins, and carried our sorrows. It is sometimes produced by a sweet discovery and acknowledgment that He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. To know and feel His love, to believe that He is our Father, His goodness meeting with, and overcoming, all our vileness, melts the heart, and subdues the stubborn will.

Again, faith wrought in the heart to know and believe that gracious declaration, that all things

do work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose, brings peace, quietness of spirit, and submission to the will of the best of Fathers, and the most kind, most constant, and most faithful of Friends.

With Christian love to yourselves and family, I remain, my dear friends, yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

VI.

(To Mr. and Mrs. F.)

Brighton, October 26, 1859.

To my dear Friends, Mr. and Mrs. F.—May the good-will of Him who dwelt in the bush ever attend you and yours. Amen.

I frequently think of my kind friends, and have often intended to send them a few lines, but circumstances have prevented. We were glad to hear from Mr. S. that Mrs. F. is much better. May the good Physician perfect her recovery, if it be His sovereign will, and grant that this very afflicting dispensation, and all His other dealings with you, may be so sanctified, that both may be profited thereby. Neither prosperity nor adversity can be useful to us, but as they are a means of bringing our souls nearer to God. When we are favoured to see His hand, hear His voice, and acknowledge Him in all our ways, this tends to abase self and to exalt the Saviour. What we want, is, to have a secret persuasion in our own hearts that God chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness; that He doth in very faithfulness afflict us, and that it all flows from

His everlasting love to us. The truth is, that the Saviour hath set His love upon poor sinners from eternity, and He intends that they should be all brought to know and believe the love that He hath to them, in time, and to love Him because He has first loved them. But what various methods He employs to bring about this union with Himself! He frequently deals with us in such a way, as would induce us to think that it is all in wrath; instead of which, nothing but good to us is intended and accomplished; and the ultimate end of all this discipline is the display of His own glory. When under the chastening hand of God, we cannot see these things; no, nor can we believe them, only as He is pleased to perform in us the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power. May He condescend to bless my dear friends with an increasing experience of these realities.

Through the mercy of God, my health has derived considerable benefit from this change, and I am looking forward to the privilege of meeting those whom I love in the Lord, once more at Staining Lane, the first Sunday in November. My desire is to leave the future with Him who hath done all things well; and though I fail in everything, His grace is sufficient for me, for His strength is made perfect in my weakness.

With our united Christian love to both, I remain,
my dear friends, yours affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN HOBBS.

VII.

(To Mr. R.)

Cambridge Terrace, January 31, 1870.

My dear Brother in Christ,—Grace, mercy, and peace be with thee. Amen.

And so your dear helpmate, for more than helpmate she was to you, is gone to the better country, that is, the heavenly. Well, the time you will have to mourn her loss can be but short. A few more cries, sighs, groans, tears, longings, pantings, and conflicts, and you and I shall be there too. The grace that saved her is sufficient for us. Your sorrow is not like that of those who have no hope; the joy of the Lord is your strength; you know whom you have believed.

That everlasting love of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, which makes the whole redeemed family in heaven and earth but one, has been extended to us, has reached our hearts. He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God. And thus it is, through rich, free, sovereign grace, that there is a sweet mixture of grief and joy, love and sorrow; but by and bye all the grief and sorrow will be gone, and nothing but everlasting joy and eternal love shall remain. But you and I are still in the valley of the shadow of death; yet we may, and do at times, sing the songs of Zion above, through faith and anticipation.

The Lord bless thee, my dear friend, with much of His presence, with the light of His countenance, and fill thy poor heart with all joy and peace in believing.

Such is the earnest desire of thy brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ,

JOHN HOBBS.

The two following letters were addressed by Dr. Hawker of Plymouth to Mr. Hobbs, soon after his entrance on the work of the ministry, and will doubtless be read with interest by many.

Plymouth, September 11, 1824.

My dear Brother in our glorious LORD,—Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from Him which is, which was, and which is to come.

Many thanks to you for your letter of love, and for your kind remembrance of me. And much obliged I am to you for the very interesting statement you have given, of the LORD's gracious dealings with your soul. The LORD having designed you for Himself, and to labour in His service, was graciously pleased, by bringing you through deep waters, thus to prepare you for an able minister of the new testament. It is always blessed when from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And sure I am that the LORD thus putting you into the furnace yourself, gave you a suitable fellow-feeling to know how to speak to souls exercised in the fire.

I shall be always happy to hear from you, and to hear of you, as a fellow-labourer in the gospel of CHRIST. And while I am in the body, it will be a kindness in you to remember such an one as Robert the aged.

The LORD have you into His especial keeping.—
Yours, my dear Brother, in the LORD,

ROBERT HAWKER.

Plymouth, December 26, 1826.

My very dear Sir and Brother,—Hearing from my dear friend, Mr. Peto, that you are on a visit at his house, though I wrote to him but yesterday, and might thereby have in some measure superseded the necessity of writing this day again to Highbury Terrace, yet I rather postponed in that letter my best and kind remembrance to you, that I might enjoy a larger pleasure, in addressing you personally yourself.

I greet you, dear Brother in the LORD. I love you in the LORD. I have great joy and consolation in your love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by you, my Brother.

Do not think I have forgotten you, because I wrote to you not. I have often intended it, but while thy servant was busy here and there, the time was gone. So is it with life. So will it be with life. And when life is over, the retrospect will furnish no more than like the Prophet's voice, melted into air, and gone. There is nothing, there can be nothing durable, permanent, and lasting, but the glorious I AM, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. In knowing Him, living on Him, walking with Him, making Him what He is in Himself in our apprehension of Him, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and ending, the all in all: here is a solid, substantial, ever-living and ever-loving security of blessedness, more than all heaven can afford, or be equal to, and made over in an everlasting covenant to His saints, to have and to hold for ever. You know all this, and live in the enjoyment of it; and can, and

do, rightly apprehend the blessedness of His own Divine and unalterable promise: 'I will cause them that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.' My dear, dear Brother, the LORD give you thus to prove Him and live upon Him yourself. And the LORD enable you thus to hold him forth to others. Your words will come with power from the heart, when GOD the HOLY GHOST hath engraven them in the living tablets of your heart, and when therefrom you *can* and *do* say with old John: '*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.*' Surely, dear Brother, we can safely recommend the bread we ourselves live upon, when we have known and proved its wholesomeness. The water we have slaked our thirst from, and tasted the purity of, we can call upon others, who are dry, to drink with us. The sword, whose blade we have known do wonders in the field of battle, we can recommend its sharpness and its edge to those who are in the encounter. And surely our knowledge of the LORD JESUS, our assured salvation in Him, the almightiness of His Person, and the almightiness of His incommunicable work in our redemption, Himself the Bread of life and the Water of life, the sword of the SPIRIT; all these, *known, tried, approved*, and found all-sufficient, all-effectual, give us a confidence in Him; and accompanied by the unction of the HOLY GHOST to the minds, and hearts, and consciences of the people, give a joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

The LORD hath brought us to the close of the year 1826. It hath been an eventful year to me, and no

doubt to thousands. It is our mercy when we can erect the Ebenezer, as the Prophet did, between the Mizpeh passed and the Shen to come. The LORD have you into His keeping. So prays your affectionate brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of JESUS CHRIST,

ROBERT HAWKER.

THE END.

OXFORD:
BY T. COMBE, M.A., E. B. GARDNER, AND E. PICKARD HALL,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.







